2013

Friends of Bill F. : alcohol, recovery, and social progress in southern fiction

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FRIENDS OF BILL F.:
ALCOHOL, RECOVERY, AND SOCIAL PROGRESS IN SOUTHERN FICTION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

In

The Department of English

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May 2013

For Katty

Acknowledgements

Without question, I would never have finished were it not for the essential contributions of others. I am forever indebted to my director, Brannon Costello. Thank you for keeping me focused, while also giving me the freedom to stumble once in a while. Your mentorship has been invaluable. I am also grateful to the rest of my committee: Rick Moreland, Jack May, and John Lowe. Thank you all for your time and for setting such high standards as professors and people.

I would also like to thank the rest of my LSU family—professors, colleagues, and friends—for all measures of help provided along the way: Kevin Casper, Deighton Zerby, Kris Mecholsky, Mitch Frye, Jerod Hollyfield, Laura Faulk, Corrie Kiesel, Laura Marks, and Matt Dischinger. I am also grateful for the classroom experiences with Professors Dan Novak, Katie Henninger, Lauren Coats, and Carl Freedman, all of whom helped me shape ideas that contributed to this project. In addition, I want to thank all of the faculty and staff in the English Department for quelling my anxiety along the way.

Thank you to John W. Crowley, my mentor and friend. None of this would be possible without your wisdom and counsel throughout. It has been an absolute privilege to be a captive audience. I am so lucky that you took an interest in my intellectual development, and I look forward to our conversations in the years to come.

My family has been eternally supportive throughout: my parents, Robert and Leslie Picken, as well as my siblings, Tyson, Dary, and Chelsea. Thank you so much to my “other” parents, Robert and Mary Lassiter. I also want to say a special thank you to my grandfather Kurt Klein and my brother Dary for dutifully reading and advising along the way.

Finally, thank you Katherine. Respect and support. I love you.

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Abstract

In “Friends of Bill F.: Alcohol, Recovery, and Social Progress in Southern Fiction,” I argue that many southern writers use the trope of drunkenness to investigate the South’s often hesitant stance toward social change. The overwhelming presence of hard drinking in southern fiction is so ubiquitous that it becomes nearly invisible, and what distinguishes twentieth century southern literary representations of alcohol from their antecedents is how overconsumption reflects a *dis-ease* in both the individual drinker and the region as a whole. Emerging from the concept of diseased drinking is the idea of *recovery*, and by foregrounding recovery language alongside depictions of addiction, these texts privilege drinking-recovery as the metaphor through which to signify how southerners confronted progress. My intervention into the discourse of the South and modernity traces the literary contours of alcoholism alongside the emerging Sobriety Movement that became popularized with the rise of Alcoholics Anonymous, to suggest that recovery from alcoholism perhaps anticipates individual and social progress. I argue that progress remained conceptually problematic for writers like William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, and Cormac McCarthy who saw the South’s tepid relationship to social change as hypocritical.

Introduction

"The pharmacological effect was also notable": Southern Masculinity and Alcoholism

> There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him that those fine fierce instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated and distilled into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank…. This it seemed to him on this December morning not only natural but actually fitting that this should have begun with whisky.
>
> William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*

How appropriate that William Wilson, co-founder and figurehead of the recovery group Alcoholics Anonymous, and William Faulkner, southern literary icon and notorious alcoholic, might share friends. After struggling with alcohol addiction for many years, Wilson, known publicly by his "anonymous" A.A. moniker Bill W., finally achieved lasting sobriety upon meeting Robert Smith ("Dr. Bob" to his fellow A.A.s). The discovery of shared kinship with a fellow drunk helped him remain sober for the rest of his life. As this partnership blossomed into a formal organization called Alcoholics Anonymous, which today counts over two million members according to its official website,[1] people maintaining sobriety through the program proudly refer to themselves as "Friends of Bill," a connection advertising the success that alcoholics can find through participation. The encounter between Wilson and Smith occurred in 1935, a year marking the approximate middle of what some critics have identified as William Faulkner's "Major Phase," a period of sustained genius spanning the publications of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) to *Go Down, Moses* (1942). Although Faulkner never permanently kicked his drinking habit, people close to him did—through A.A., no less—most notably his wife Estelle. As I argue throughout this project, Faulkner and other likeminded southern writers of the time represented alcohol and drinking—pillars of masculine self-identity in the South—in ways suggesting a (sub)conscious awareness of recovery ideology. The drunken southerner no longer

[1] According to the A.A. Fact File prepared by the organization's general service office, worldwide individual membership was 2,057,672 strong, spread among 107,976 groups as of January 1, 2011 (www.aa.org).

consumed harmlessly, for he was now physiologically afflicted. Like Bill W., Faulkner—or perhaps more appropriately, Bill F.—amassed a cadre of friends of his own, though the Friends of Bill F. are connected not in literal sobriety per se but in their literary representations of alcoholic drinking. These portrayals link prodigious southern drinkers who suffer the same alcoholic anguish felt by Dr. Bob and Bill W. For the Friends of Bill F., though, the depths of their drunken despair are magnified by the precarious social state of the South from the 1930s through the 1950s and beyond. Unlike the Friends of Bill W. who find salvation through sobriety, Friends of Bill F. face a steeper (sometimes impossible) road to recovery, since, as I argue, their alcoholic affliction is compounded by a southern cultural heritage that resists change.

It is appropriate to begin a project about drinking and social change in southern fiction with the above epigraph from Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. Besides being an iconic figure of southern letters, Faulkner is a most suitable starting point because he wrestled with many of the themes running throughout this project, namely how the South, a region that stubbornly resisted outside pressures to its cherished cultural heritage, maintained stasis in matters concerning social change. Faulkner attempts to reconcile sentiment for his native soil with the South's increasingly problematic stance relative to progress, and his fiction details the ways that southerners react to this same predicament. How, he asks, can the South maintain the course when it is so clearly immoral, backward, and, withstanding pressure from the nation at large, untenable? For a white male writer of and from the South, Faulkner's social status allowed for both trenchant observation and stinging portrayal of southerners conflicted, confused, and ambiguous about their role in, among other anti-progressive pillars, racial oppression. Faulkner's South was not populated by beautiful plantations and antebellum chivalry, but rather by the people and places bearing the scars left by centuries of social inequality.

One way that Faulkner critiqued the conflicted South was through depictions of alcohol and drinking. As the above passage from "The Bear" shows, drinking was long privileged as an everyday part of life that demonstrated one's class status and masculinity, as well as the central prop in rituals marking men ("not women, not boys and children") *as* men (particularly *white* men, a point I return to later). But as modernity encroached and the romanticism of December morning hunts assumed new resonance, so, too, did the significance of drinking for these men. As Ike McCaslin is baptized into the culture of ritualized alcohol consumption among southern hunters, the land is being destroyed and its inhabitants displaced by newly emerging industries. Modernity—in the form of industry and as the nexus of/for social progress—fundamentally altered the way that Faulkner and other writers of his ilk (white men) saw their South existing, and, consequently, the everyday rituals associated with "being" southern were reconfigured as a means through which to grapple with these changes. Along with sizable shifts in how commerce and social policy affected the southern psyche, drinking assumed new significance after Prohibition was repealed, as the disease paradigm of "alcoholism" now held prominence in the national consciousness. Suddenly, drinking on December mornings became a precarious endeavor, especially for those afflicted by this physiological disease. Void of the nostalgic bent of Ike McCaslin's morning hunt, drinking in Faulkner's fictive South came to signify the ambiguity and confusion felt by the region's forced encounter with modernity. Drinking became something very serious in southern fiction, a ritual with consequences for diseased individuals as well as for the region populated by them.

In this project, I argue that modern southern writers use the tropes of drunkenness and recovery to investigate the South's hesitant stance toward social change. Belief in social progress remained conceptually challenging for William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, and Cormac

McCarthy—white southern men of material privilege—who saw the South's relationship to progress as problematic. Their privileged spot atop the southern social hierarchy symbolized the ideological location from which much of the region's stagnation originated, and as writers whose work confronts the regressive stances of their homeland, they began distancing themselves from the celebrated cultural aspects relative to their socio-economic position. By appropriating language germane to recovery ("on the wagon," for example) into representations of drinking, however, these writers offer a new means through which to contextualize the South's often irreconcilable position to a changing modern world toward the middle of the twentieth-century. The overwhelming presence of hard drinking in southern fiction is so ubiquitous that it becomes nearly invisible, and what distinguishes these twentieth century southern literary representations from their antecedents is how excessive consumption reflects *dis*-ease in both the individual drinker and the region as a whole. The use of recovery language alongside depictions of addiction shows drinking and recovery to be essential signifiers reflecting how southerners confront the progressing nation-state. My critical intervention traces the literary contours of alcoholism alongside the emerging Sobriety Movement to suggest that recovery for alcoholics might also metaphorically represent both individual and collective progress.

While the texts I focus on sometimes deviate from the white male drinking character, the most significant cultural critique begins and ends with him. Integral to my analysis of these drinkers are the ways in which they maintain power in the South. In *The Nation's Region* (2006), Leigh Anne Duck examines the often contradictory interplay between a distinctly American ethos of liberalism committed to change and a region that, in all of its "backwardness," remains firmly committed to ideas of stagnation associated with an antiquated cultural tradition. Broadly speaking, the South was a region whose stance toward ideas of social change remained

lukewarm at best. In this sense, the texts I use show how the region's inevitable (yet troubled) confrontation with social progress *has* to be a white male one, since white men represent the entrenched race and gender of the status quo. Early on, alcoholism was understood as a condition affecting white men. Of course there were exceptions to this, but by and large, early models of and treatment for alcoholism ignored[2] women and African Americans in order to bolster the success for recovery among diseased men. Thus, these white male writers mirror the historically white male character afflicted by alcoholism. Through the textual saturation of alcohol, these authors—to different degrees and in different ways—show how the South remained drunkenly conflicted regarding social change. The specifics of drinking in these texts allow these writers the cultural and material means through which to interrogate the "backward" region they represent. Some historical overview further situates southern white men as pivotal to the ways that problem drinking and progress are viewed in this project.

The historical centrality of alcohol in America's social and political consciousness cannot be overstated. Beginning with the Washingtonians in the 1840s, highly organized temperance groups vocalized a growing discontent regarding what many agreed was becoming a national pandemic of alcoholic overconsumption. The seeds of such protest evolved and proliferated, spawning many incarnations, all with agendas centered on the legislative prohibition of alcohol.

[2] See William L. White's *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* pages 158-162 for a more extensive analysis of how women and blacks were secondary citizens in Alcoholics Anonymous. Early on, women were excluded on grounds that their presence would spark a sexual connection with a male drunkard, thus compromising his sobriety. A popular A.A. phrase warned that "Under every skirt is a slip" (158). White notes that, "In A.A.'s early years, women and people of color encountered in A.A. exactly what they encountered within the culture as a whole" (159), which is to say that outside inequalities were replayed within the group. In 1945, one group publication titled *AA Grapevine* listed eleven reasons "Why Women Alcoholics Have a Tougher Fight." All of the reasons underscore a sexist culture defining innate differences in women that make sobriety more precarious. Among the most nauseating reasons listed: "So many women want to run things"; "Women talk too much"; "Sooner or later, a woman-on-the-make sallies into a group, on the prowl for phone numbers and dates"; "Few women can think in the abstract" (159). White points out that, despite a larger culture's subordination of women and people of color, A.A. aspired to be a colorblind organization benefitting all alcoholics. True though this may be, early conceptions of alcoholism and its most popular treatment were nonetheless controlled by and skewed toward white men.

Using whatever tactics necessary, early Dry advocates (many of the most prominent and influential of whom were women) argued that drinking in excess threatened family stability. The image of the inebriated husband—red-eyed, reeking of booze, and (worst) afflicted with venereal disease—assumed symbolic resonance with Drys who couched drunkenness in strict moral terms. Dry advocacy depended on the idea that drunkenness was a sin that decayed individual morality and, consequently, destabilized the greater community; the drunken husband, thus, embodied a threat to the future of America itself. As temperance grew in stature, its voice could no longer be ignored by those in power. Temperance reformers now attracted the political shakers capable of influencing broad legislation, specifically Wayne Wheeler and the Anti-Saloon League (ASL) in the early years of the twentieth-century. Generally speaking, the effect of the Temperance-ASL alliance was twofold: first, the Dry message spread with rapid efficiency and became more threatening to the political status quo; second, capitalizing on the popularity and momentum of organizations such as the Anti-Saloon League, other "progressive" reformers hitched their political agendas to the temperance wagon, evolving the movement into a multi-pronged political machine associated with the Ku Klux Klan and woman suffragists, among others. These political Drys won their most important victory with the passage of the Volstead Act in 1919—the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, more popularly known as Prohibition—when (with minor exceptions) the production, distribution, and consumption of spirits was outlawed.[3]

The prohibition of alcohol reconfigured the way that people understood drinking as a symbolic act in America's cultural nexus. While Prohibition actualized the Dry platform—the number of drinkers decreased overall as church membership increased—it also bred unintended

[3] For more detail, see Daniel Okrent's excellent social history of Prohibition *Last Call: the Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. I outline more specifics of this history in chapter one.

consequences that threatened the entire program. People still thirsted for booze, and loopholes in the Volstead Act were exploited as a complex underground network of bootlegging and speakeasies proliferated to satisfy swelling demand. Organized crime soon followed, as well as an emerging educated class of young adults who found solidarity and thrill in their open disrespect for a law that many viewed as merely symbolic. As America entered the Great Depression, temperance politics no longer held as much sway, and the commerce promised by the alcohol industry catalyzed Repeal of the Volstead Act not yet fourteen years into its existence. Repeal's fallout proved far more consequential than a simple move to legalize drinking, however. Prohibition had fundamentally changed how drinking was practiced and understood, and while the booze industry seamlessly assimilated back into the game of legal commerce (with obvious changes in public relations and marketing), America had to contend with new Wet-Dry politics in the form of individual states' laws of prohibition.

Prohibition affected all of America, but its history in the South assumed weighted significance, particularly through the manner in which temperance advocacy defined outlawed drinking as something ideologically progressive. In the years preceding Prohibition, for example, white southern prohibitionists "conjured not an argument but an image: the waking nightmare of a black man with a bottle of whiskey in one hand and a ballot in the other" (Okrent 43). The racism and xenophobia of some dry southerners influenced the tone of their political reform, specifically the Immigrant Restriction Act of 1924 which essentially capped quotas on particular immigrant groups. Excess numbers were locked out or deported. Congress' intent was painfully obvious in its use of census data from thirty years earlier to set the number of "acceptable" immigrants (238). Not surprisingly (and for various reasons), the South remained firm in its almost wholesale refusal to support Repeal. Although such sentiment was not merely relegated to

the South, it remained strong in the region. Of the changes in America's habits of consumption stemming from Repeal, Okrent states,

> But Repeal changed all that, replacing the almost-anything-goes ethos with a series of state-by-state codes, regulations, and enforcement procedures. Now there were closing hours and age limits and Sunday blue laws, as well as a collection of geographic proscriptions that kept bars or package stores distant from schools, churches, or hospitals. State licensing requirements forced legal sellers to live by the code, and in many instances statutes created penalties for buyers as well. Just as Prohibition did not prohibit, making drink legal did not make drink entirely available (374).

Blue Laws now quilted the South, projecting a patchwork of conservative ideology that kept drinking illegal, or, at the very least, stigmatized it as something that was fundamentally wrong.

Although there remained an active presence of Dry advocacy in the rest of post-Repeal America, its most visible contingency lay south of the Mason-Dixon line, highlighting the old battle line that symbolically separated North from South in matters political, social, and economic.[4] Many of the vitriolic, divisive advocates aligning themselves with the temperance movement before Prohibition now held positions of power in the post-Repeal South. This presence personified the region's anti-progressive politics, affirming that "what had once appeared [to be] a stable southern alterity was [now] broadly perceived as a threat—a site from which antimodern and antidemocratic beliefs and practices could spread" (Duck 80). The racist, xenophobic cadre disguised as temperance reformers in the decades preceding Prohibition now served as prominent members of southern dry society, and the South's political refusal to embrace change remained firm well into the twentieth-century. However unfair it might be to characterize an entire populace based on the bold actions of the empowered few, the South—

[4] In "AA and the Redeployment of Temperance Literature," Philip McGowan states "By reading the behavior of the lower classes, immigrants, and the nation's black population … as deviant and subversive, temperance promoters succeeded in bolstering the central ethos of an American, Protestant success story: that an industrious and sober capitalism provided for Earthly and Heavenly reward, while simultaneously excluding unregenerate 'others' from such visions of visible and valued social identity" (4). In the nineteenth-century, progressive Democrats stumped according to their geography: while northern Democrats argued for abolition, their southern democrats "were more excised by the drink question, defending its preeminence through recourse to racial-purity arguments" (4-5).

right or wrong—radiated an image of *collective* resistance to social change, despite the ethos of progress trumpeted by the rest of America.

In the decades following Repeal, the South's dry laws mirrored its refusal to contribute to the sea change of progress. Ironically, the region's social and political stance proved antithetical to the evolving ways that drinking was now understood, since drunkenness was no longer considered a moral-immoral binary. As America dusted itself off after the political tug-of-war—Wet versus Dry—the social significance of drinking became less about exercising one's autonomy in protesting an unpopular law (as many did in defiance of the Volstead Act) and more of an act of (destructive) self-medication meant to salve the individual and collective psyches dealing with the irreconcilability of social discord (what Walker Percy identifies below as "anomie"). Heavy drinking was no longer seen as a collective problem plaguing the nation, but rather an individual, physiological affliction. Historian Lori Rotskoff notes that "Various groups of scientific, medical, and self-credentialed authorities replaced an essentially moralistic view of overindulgence as a *sin* with a modern, therapeutic conception of excessive drinking as a *sickness*" (2). Besides the new drinking laws that now characterized the post-Repeal South, an emerging paradigm that saw alcoholism as a disease began to embed itself in the popular imagination. What has been broadly conceived as the Sobriety Movement (and, later, the Recovery Movement) began with the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, the publication of the organization's "Big Book" outlining the Twelve Steps in 1939, and the steadily increasing membership into the 1940s and early 1950s. Although the alcohol-as-disease paradigm encountered resistance, Alcoholics Anonymous remained the most accepted model of personal recovery from the *disease* of alcoholism throughout the rest of the twentieth-century, combining equal parts group solidarity, individual responsibility, and submission to a higher

power. This new model of disease gained considerable traction throughout the mid-twentieth century. In its relative infancy (1945), Alcoholics Anonymous counted over 15,000 members, and this figure ballooned to over 130,000 just ten years later and 200,000 by 1957 (107). The Sobriety Movement conceived of drinking in ways that deviated significantly from the rebellious, drink-at-all-costs mentality born out of Prohibition and an aversion to temperance politics, and the emergence of this disease model paralleled America's (and, importantly, the South's) encounters with modernity and the tides of social change.

Although Prohibition's conflation of politics and morality is not unique in American legislative history, the cultural weight of *alcohol* to the Wet-Dry narrative divide highlights the charged connection between progress and drinking in the South. Alcohol long held a precarious occupation within the southern imaginary. Reflecting on a trip through the South in the 1940s, foreign correspondent John Gunther offered the following account of drinking in the region**:**

> Dry as the South may be in some spots, it is also the hardest-drinking region I have ever seen in the world, and the area with the worst drinking habits by far. There are no bars permitted in most cities; hence, people drink by the private bottle, and, as always, hypocrisy begets disorderly behavior. Never in Port Said, Shanghai, or Marseilles have I seen the kind of drinking that goes on in Atlanta, Houston, or Memphis every Saturday night—with officers in uniform vomiting in hotel lobbies, men and women of the country-club category being carried off the dance floor by disinterested waiters… (qtd in Barr 253).

Gunther's observation betrays a fundamental paradox of southern social life. How can a region whose drinking laws exist to prevent sinful consumption be populated with the most hypocritical and habitual consumers? This quote speaks not only to the location of this paradoxical consumption (the Dry South) but also to the severity of its practice ("private bottle" pulls inducing "vomiting in hotel lobbies") as well as the startling character of its participants ("officers in uniform"). And while these observations might seem harsh, Gunther goes further. When he asked people why the South remained dry, he received many answers:

> One was that southerners fear outbursts of drunkenness by Negroes. Surely what this means is that they also fear outbursts of drunkenness by themselves … The South contains a great number of profoundly schizoid people; the whole region is a land of paranoia, full of the mentally sick; most Southerners feel a deep necessity to hate something, if necessary even themselves … A Southerner will, perhaps without expressing it consciously or concretely, work out an equation something like the following: "We are not going to give up the Negro; therefore we must give up something else. We will not give up fundamentalism, sex, white supremacy or slavery; so we give up rationality instead" (253).

Gunther's rhetoric, again, speaks to how (fair or not) outsiders perceived a region that unapologetically accepts a culture preaching one thing while practicing another. These "schizoid people" live their lives as justified do-gooders within the confines of an outdated social structure ignoring the modernizing tides of history recognized by the rest of the country. Closing down the bars the night before church illustrates another backward practice meant to preserve an inflated self-identity of what and how the region *should* be, something Leigh Anne Duck states was "incompatible with the progress still highly valued during this [modernizing] period of U.S. history" (76). For hard drinking southerners, Saturday night binges were completely separate from Sunday morning hymn singing, and these incongruities remained in line with the region's anti-modern stance on social progress. Only in a place where liquored breath and glazed eyes nod in agreement with preachy moralizing does such behavior occur without scrutiny and self-reflection.

So what are the implications in such a critique of a place where every drunken someone seems predisposed to hate something? More specifically, what might alcohol and drinking "tell about the South," both as a region stubbornly entrenched in its antiquated worldview and as a place where tradition—good and bad—continues to occupy such precious social and cultural space? If, as Gunther suggests, every flask holds as much hatred as it does whiskey, then how can this correlation illuminate something either contributing to or subtracting from the South as a

region of regression? Not surprisingly, Bill F. and friends experienced and translated the situations Gunther articulates, using alcohol and drinking in the South as a touchstone to critique such ethical inconsistencies. While the concept of drinking represents a projection of particular values, its problematic aftereffects (physical, physiological, moral, et cetera) mark it with a certain cultural deviance not associated with, say, fried foods or sweet tea. Furthermore, alcohol's nefarious location within the narrative of America's legislative history deepens its signifying power as something intrinsically malignant in its presence and consumption. Gunther's blanket observation that southern drinking habits placate hatred is slightly misunderstood as a sentiment characterizing the works of the Friends of Bill F.; instead, I suggest that these drinking characters imbibe in such destructive ways as a means to cope with the confusion resulting from their living in a socially stagnant region that confronts the push and pull of modern social progress from every direction. Some of these characters accept the paradox and hypocrisy of southern social stagnation, while others clearly reject it. Drinking exacerbates these tensions in both cases.

Focusing primarily on works published from 1931-1979 (though all are set inside a twenty year period from roughly 1930-1950), this study conceives of drinking in two ways. First, it speaks to how shifting attitudes and conceptions of alcohol significantly inform the portrayals of drinking in these works. I suggest that, by marking certain characters with very specific patterns of consumption, these writers reveal an historical awareness concerning the evolving ways that alcohol and drinking registered on the national consciousness. Second, drinking in these texts acts, in varying degrees, as a proxy for the South's precarious encounters with social and political progress—speaking to the region's inability to embrace such change—and the cultural consequences from this shortfall. Alcohol's symbolic and often ironic significance as a

material marker that can simultaneously draw the ire of religious groups, yet be consumed with astonishing frequency, makes analyzing its location in southern literature important in a broader study of southern progress-regress. In other words, drinking's propensity to polarize—good/bad, moral/immoral, legal/illegal—public sentiment in a region where identity has been formed by its own history of division and polarity makes it a perfect fit for insight into how consumption affects the individual and collective psyches of a region begrudgingly forced to confront the tides of change. Other scholars broach the idea of the South's ideological abjection from the rest of the nation—Leigh Anne Duck and Robert Brinkmeyer among others—and their work in this field will prove useful. I see this project as both deriving and deviating from their work by examining how southern "backwardness" might be reinterpreted through literal and metaphorical alcoholism; when considering it from angles of disease and recovery, drinking represents a region perhaps capable of progress, though often hopelessly marred by the southern propensity to consume recklessly. The trope of the drunken southerner, in the end, remains a marker of stasis, though a shifting masculinity in these characters reflects the possibility that genuine progress and improvement can be achieved. Disease does not mean death in all cases, either for the southerner or the South.

As I see it, this study considers several variables in its ongoing analysis of how alcohol and drinking are represented in southern fiction. The first is region. I suggest that drinking in the South is unique in its history and practice, especially regarding how it is perceived from within and without. The next variable is addiction and how this concept evolves over time. I rely on Susan Zieger's use of the evolving metaphorical ways that addiction presents itself in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. Like Zieger's work, my project "identifies the moments when addiction and the addict became newly visible through changes in the narratives

and metaphors used in describing them" (18). The chronology (1931-1979) of the four primary texts I analyze in detail reveals marked distinctions in how alcohol addiction (as well as the individual addict) is portrayed, and I trace these differences to a shifting cultural understanding of how alcoholism is defined and understood alongside the Sobriety Movement. The final variable is recovery, both literal and figurative (I make this distinction clearly in chapter two). With a now widely accepted "diagnosis" of alcoholism as a medical disease, the notion of recovery from it assumes new meaning. If, as I argue, drinking in these texts also indicates a kind of individual (existential) dis-ease at the region's hesitance to embrace paradigms of change, then recovery (like addiction) also attains metaphorical status. If one can be recovered from addiction, then perhaps the region itself might also be recovered enough to embrace progress.

The race and gender of the authors I consider are central to my argument that intertwines equal parts region, addiction, and recovery/progress. As I stated earlier, all of the southern writers I analyze are white men[5] born into material privilege. This demographic is essential to my focus of how alcohol and drinking are represented in dynamic new ways that supersede the oft-written stereotypical drunk southern gentleman. As my analysis shows, alcoholism was commonly perceived by early recovery experts to be a specifically white, male problem.

[5] I do not discuss sexuality at length as it relates to drinking and southern masculinity. For an excellent analysis of the (overtly heterosexual) social, economic, and cultural history of Bourbon and southern manhood, see Sean S. McKeithan's "Every Ounce a Man's Whiskey? Bourbon in the White Masculine South." McKeithan relates drinking to performing an identity that "give[s] us insight into the ways people not only present themselves, but also perceive of themselves, know themselves, and know of others. By studying these performances in a given cultural context, we can begin to see which identities are privileged and which are policed in that culture" (9). McKeithan is interested in how the loaded cultural act of drinking projects power and how this works with or against "accepted" sexual norms. He writes that the "weight and gravity of Bourbon register symbolically through the drink's historical legacy and sensuously through its bite—that burn that makes learning to drink whiskey hard work and separates the proverbial men from the boys (and girls, and queers)" (18). McKeithan outlines the different cultural/political significance in drinking bourbon based on sexuality: "When a straight white southern man sidles up to a bar for a Bourbon, he is—whether consciously or not—asserting culture, physical and material power." Conversely, "When someone of a different background does the same, this person is—whether consciously or not—challenging that very same history and their exclusions from its positions of privilege" (18).

Although the disease itself was hardly bound by race or gender, popularized accounts of it[6] project a decidedly homogenous quality to its afflicted, something substantiated by the suspiciously monochromatic look of A.A.'s nascent incarnations. Consider how media critic Elayne Rapping outlines the group's early dynamic:

> It is important to realize … that AA—so traditionally white, middle-class, and masculinist in its assumptions—was the perfect organization for the times precisely because it did focus primarily upon the segment of the population, white Christian males, whose traditional roles and perquisites were being most severely challenged and usurped…. AA was understandably concerned with preserving and bolstering male authority … [and] AA reproduced the basic structures of patriarchal family life, at a time when its economic foundations were shifting and failing for many men (qtd in Rotskoff 110).

Alcoholism—at least the treatment for it—re-instantiated traditional power hierarchies that privileged disease and recovery: drunkenness is a white man's affliction and is treatable after he reasserts himself as a societal leader. But recovery from alcoholism meant something deeper for white southern men due to the ways that drinking's cultural currency dovetailed with precepts of masculinity and, subsequently, possession of power. What seems missing from Rapping's description is *southern*, though such an omission is telling. As I show throughout, alcohol consumption in the South remained a badge of masculinity, so to stop drinking—particularly in line with a (northern) definition of a medicalized disease—compromised a foundational tenet of southern male self-identity that was preoccupied with power. Indeed, as the South was forced to confront its stagnant place in the continuum of social progress, its strongholds of power—occupied often by, you guessed it, white men of privilege—bore increasing unease at the situation. The timeless remedy to placate anxiety, drinking, was being redefined as something that could not only *not* remedy the problem but was now understood to be the problem itself.

[6] See John W. Crowley's *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction* (1994) and Lori Rotskoff's *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (2007) for excellent case studies linking white men to alcoholism. I return to these sources throughout the project.

Compounding the situation for white southern drinking men was the fact that, with even the slightest degree of self-reflection, they saw themselves as impeding progress. Where to turn if not the bottle?

While this project is not primarily biographical in its critical bent, the drinking histories of the three main players are important to acknowledge as having, at the very least, some influence on how they represent drinking relative to progress and recovery. Faulkner's case remains the most transparent, since his alcoholic drinking has been well documented. For Warren, drinking was also a problem[7] with which he contended for a long time, particularly when teaching at Louisiana State University during his tumultuous marriage to Cinina, his first wife. Much biographical information on McCarthy remains scant, though it is known that he abruptly stopped drinking decades ago. In all of these cases, the authors' works centralize alcohol and drinking in ways that, I argue, project both sides of dis-ease/disease; that is, individual overconsumption as indicative of the region's troubling response to social change. In these cases, though, overindulgence became problematized in light of the medical disease of alcoholism. Like the cultural hegemony of the entire South, drinking was the literal and metaphorical act scrutinized by white male writers who were unapologetic in criticizing their homeland.

Personal drinking histories aside, these three primary writers also serve my project well in the manners in which they engage the historical trajectory of the Sobriety Movement. This

[7] Both Robert Penn Warren and his first wife Cinina struggled with alcohol. Although Warren did not consume as prodigiously as Faulkner, he nonetheless acknowledged a compulsion to drink, writing, "'It has taken me all this time to conquer the impulse to start drinking after breakfast. And even yet the impulse in the middle of the afternoon is recalcitrant'" (Blotner 145-146). For the most part, Warren's drinking remained under control. The same cannot be said for Cinina, whose frequent drunkenness exacerbated insecurities about her intellectual inferiority. Warren biographer Joseph Blotner writes that "One afternoon when Warren came home early he found Cinina drunk, the first evidence that she had become a secret solitary drinker" (145). Cinina once admitted to a friend, "'I feel abnormal when I'm completely sober'" (147). A combination of her manic episodes and alcoholism eventually caused the couple to divorce.

study covers considerable historical ground that meaningfully parallels the emergence of the Sobriety/Recovery Movement: Prohibition, Repeal, World War II, and the postwar economic boom. I detail this correlation in the subsequent chapters, so only a brief summary suffices here. Faulkner's novels *Sanctuary* (1931) and *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) consider drinking and recovery during Prohibition (before the Sobriety Movement) and in the fifteen years or so after Repeal, during which time Alcoholics Anonymous gained prominence in the national consciousness. Thus, Faulkner's treatment of Gowan Stevens and Temple Drake evolves dramatically as it differentiates between pre- and post-Repeal (over)consumption. Although Warren's *All the King's Men* (1946) is partly set during Prohibition, its midcentury publication colors the novel's drinking through a narrative awareness of both the Sobriety Movement that was gaining popularity and the looming presence of America's involvement in World War II. Willie Stark's descent into drunkenness and Jack Burden's gradual sobriety speak to the South's metaphorical vulnerability (and resistance) to radically progressive politics. Although McCarthy's *Suttree* (1979) was written over a twenty year period, it is set during the early 1950s, an era marking the Sunbelt South's uneven prosperity. Contrasting this prosperity, though, was a population of destitutes whose addictions (and the outside perception of them) embodied longstanding material gaps between the haves and have-nots.

While this project emerges from authorial responses to major historical moments in the twentieth-century, it is also useful to frame the authors and their works in terms of generations, particularly since, as I show, there existed significant distinction between how persons coming of age on either side of Volstead America conceived of alcohol and drinking. Again, some biographical information helps illuminate this point. Consider the lifespans of the authors: William Faulkner (1897-1962), Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989), Cormac McCarthy (1933-

present). As John W. Crowley suggests in *The White Logic*, Faulkner is not alone among (white) American modernists born in the late nineteenth century who drank prodigiously. That he was a southerner certainly compounds his cultural propensity to imbibe frequently and destructively. Also, Faulkner was old enough to grasp the undercurrent of Wet-Dry tensions during the pre-Prohibition temperance spectacles dotting the landscape. When liquor was finally outlawed, Faulkner was already comfortably into his twenties, the age in which, as Crowley and others point out, young people drank defiantly. I am not suggesting that Faulkner did or did not consume this specific way, only that he was of a generation whose views on drinking were influenced by public Wet-Dry discourse. Although Warren was, at most, half a generation younger than Faulkner, when considering how his adolescence and young adulthood coincided with Prohibition, the eight year gap between them is more pronounced. I do not wish to exaggerate their generational disparity, but merely want to underscore how their distance from Prohibition would have been significant in how they understood drinking as part of a regional birthright. McCarthy is clearly of a later generation, which naturally makes his conception of drinking as southern masculine ritual different. While his first novel, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), references the socio-political climate in the South during the height of the Temperance Movement, he largely elides much direct engagement with it in his work. As I show in chapter three, McCarthy represents southern drinking as something wholly different than either Faulkner or Warren, and this, I argue, stems from a consciousness that is well aware of the disease model of alcoholism (or the nasty consequences of prolonged drinking; unlike his predecessors, he does not romanticize alcohol in the least). What I am outlining here are distinct generational worldviews formed by these authors' experiences with alcohol(ism) and recovery/progress relative to when they came of age in the South. One writer born between Warren and McCarthy,

Walker Percy, shares many similarities with the Friends of Bill F. While Percy is not a central figure to this study due to the distinct manner in which he represents alcoholism (I detail this more below), one essay perfectly illustrates the loaded cultural significance that drinking holds in the South, especially for white men of privilege. This essay situates alcohol consumption as something equally affected and unaffected by Prohibition, as well as a crucial rite of passage for young southern men.

In his posthumously published essay, "Bourbon," Percy extols the aesthetic virtues of drinking bourbon, carefully distinguishing between the cultural and physiological effects of a whiskey buzz. For Percy, bourbon drinking represents a southern ritual of masculine self-making that, yes, induces a relaxed cerebral state of boozy bliss but, more importantly, marks seminal moments in his childhood and young adult life with particular significance. He writes that the "joy of bourbon drinking is not the pharmacological effect of the C2H5OH on the cortex but rather the instant of the whiskey being knocked back and the little explosion of Kentucky U.S.A. sunshine in the cavity of the nasopharynx and the hot bosky bite of Tennessee sunshine—aesthetic considerations to which the effect of alcohol is, if not dispensable, at least secondary" (103). Mixed with Percy's affection for bourbon are the ways in which these formative moments of youthful libation shape his sense of self, specifically as a young man coming of age in the South when consuming alcohol is as much a rite of masculine passage as it is a means of adolescent rebellion. "I can recall being broke with some friends in Tennessee," he writes "and deciding to have a party and being able to afford only two-fifths of a $1.75 bourbon called Two Natural … The pharmacological effect was also notable. After knocking back two or three shots over a period of half an hour, the three male drinkers looked at each other and said in a single voice: 'Where are the women?'" (102). Percy's memories of bourbon drunk neat coincide with

adolescence, hormones, and, above all, his own misgivings about the confusion induced by the modern world.

The aesthetic of bourbon breaks down into two categories. The first accounts for "how one balances out the Epicurean virtues of evocation of time and memory and the recovery of self and the past from the fogged-in disoriented Western world" where "the use of Bourbon to such an end is a kind of aestheticized religious mode of existence" (104). He provides the following example of such a drinker: "Clifton Webb, scarf at throat, sitting at Cap d'Antibes on a perfect day, the little wavelets of the Mediterranean sparking in the sunlight, and he is savoring a 1959 Mouton Rothschild" (104). For Percy, this religious aesthetic contrasts with what he calls "the aesthetic of damnation," which amounts to the "single-minded stimulation of sensory organs" (104). Drinking to intoxication is fundamentally different than the existential pleasure one achieves while contemplating the past amid the complex, confusing present. Percy identifies none other than Bill F. as the exemplar of the aesthetic of damnation:

> [I]magine William Faulkner, having just finished *Absalom, Absalom!*, drained, written out, pissed off, feeling himself over the edge and out of it, nowhere but he goes somewhere, his favorite hunting place in the Delta wilderness of the Big Sunflower River and, still feeling bad with his hunting cronies and maybe even a little phony, which he was, what with him trying to pretend he was one of them, a farmer, hunkered down in the cold and rain after the hunt, after the honorable passing up the does and seeing no bucks, shivering and snot-nosed, takes out a flat pint of any Bourbon at all and flatfoots about a third of it. He shivers again but not from the cold (105).

Percy's aesthetics of bourbon conflates two experiential aspects: bourbon drunk neat allows a spiritual self-awakening, lifting the fog from the modern world, and it induces a physiological pleasure (though not necessarily outright drunkenness) that binds masculinity to ritual.

The essay's tone remains lighthearted throughout; Percy recounts his formative years with self-deprecation and wit, offering autobiographical snippets through vignettes of drinking.

His development from boy to man is inextricably wound up with the aesthetics of bourbon. Appropriately, he says "Bourbon does for me what the piece of cake did for Proust" (105). Percy provides a brief timeline speaking to the Proustian association between memory and taste. The dates he chooses demonstrate a consciousness formed in part by the aesthetics of bourbon (and drinking alcohol in general), but they also show how Percy's early associations with alcohol are shaped by a culture and tradition of southern masculinity mindful of the debates and laws surrounding alcohol consumption in America during the first few decades of the twentieth-century. Percy's malleable consciousness forms alongside highly charged moments in America's drinking history.[8] 1926 (age 9 or 10): "As a child watching my father in Birmingham, in the exurbs, living next to number-6 fairway of the New Country Club, him disdaining both the bathtub gin and white lightning of the time, aging his own Bourbon in a charcoal keg, on his hands and knees in the basement sucking on a siphon … the decanter ready, the first hot spurt in his mouth not spat out" (105). 1933 (16 or 17): "My uncle's sun parlor in the Mississippi Delta and toddies on a Sunday afternoon, the prolonged and meditative tinkle of silver spoon against crystal to dissolve the sugar; talk, tinkle, talk; the talk mostly political: 'Roosevelt is doing a good job; no, the son of a bitch is betraying his class'" (105). 1934 (17 or 18): At the Delta dance in college, Percy and his cohorts escape the disappointed glare of the sorority girls by swigging bourbon from a Coke bottle: "It's awful. Tears start from eyes, faces turn red. 'Hot damn, that's good!'" (105). 1935 (18 or 19): While on a blind date for the Duke-North Carolina football game, Percy soothes his nerves the appropriate way: "Take a drink, by now from a proper concave hip flask (a long way from the Delta Coke bottle) with a hinged top.… The taste of the Bourbon (Cream of Kentucky) and the smell of her fuse with the brilliant Carolina fall and the

[8] Percy lived from 1916-1990, approximately one generation between Robert Penn Warren and Cormac McCarthy.

sounds of the crowd and the hit of the linemen in a single synesthesia" (105-106). 1941 (24 or 25): Drinking mint juleps while watching the men and women stumble drunkenly about.

The essay concludes with a more detailed account of his first mint julep. The episode is set outside of the South, though like the others mentioned, it occurs while in the company of a woman. After the julep, he and the Bellevue nurse with whom he imbibes switch to gin fizzes "because the bartender said he came from New Orleans and could make good ones. He could and did. They were delicious. What I didn't know was that they were made with raw egg albumen and I was allergic[9] to it" (106). Nervously anticipating the love they are to share after leaving the bar, Percy's "upper lip began to swell and little sparks of light flew past the corner of my eye like St. Elmo's fire. In the space of thirty seconds my lip stuck out a full three-quarter inch … I made it across the bridge, pulled over to the curb, and fainted. Whereupon this noble nurse drove me back to Bellevue, gave me a shot, and put me to bed" (106). As in each of the aforementioned episodes, Percy fails to get the girl, though that seldom matters since the bourbon drinking offers a masculinizing substitute to his failed trysts. He writes, "Anybody who monkeys around with gin and egg white deserves what he gets. I should have stuck with Bourbon and have from that day to this" (106-107). The essay concludes with—what else?—a postscript recipe for "*Cud'n Walker's Uncle Will's Favorite Mint Julep Receipt*," that, after following it, allows one to "settle back in your chair for half an hour of cumulative bliss" (107).

[9] My analysis of Percy does not include his fiction, though alcohol and drinking regularly recur in his novels. In *Love in the Ruins* (1971), the protagonist and first-person narrator Tom More characterizes himself as "a physician, a not very successful psychiatrist; an alcoholic, a shaky middle-aged man subject to depressions and elations and morning terrors" (11). Percy incorporates at least one autobiographical moment into Tom More, who, when the novel opens is "sweating and broken out in hives from drinking gin fizzes" (4). By novel's end, More has stopped drinking, though the recovery is hardly referenced. Likewise, Lancelot Lamar, narrator and protagonist of *Lancelot* (1977) also drinks prodigiously, going so far as burning his house down (and killing the people inside) while drunk. He admits, "I feel like an alcoholic who knows certain people when he is drunk. You are like a tactful 'drunk' friend who is willing not to be acknowledged at certain times" (4). Unlike in the texts by the Friends of Bill F., drinking in Percy is secondary to other concerns and does not reflect the author's ideas about social progress.

Percy's aesthetics of bourbon (both "religious" and "damnable") couches the experience of drinking it within the confines of southern masculinity and social class—whiskey buzzes make you a man, but not as much as the cultural appreciation for these buzzes, and this, he implies, happens more regularly by persons with the material means to appreciate aesthetics of any sort. His awareness of how bourbon shapes the culturally formative stages of youth and early manhood necessitates a specific region, and the South plays an integral yet unspoken part in developing the aesthetic. The aesthetics of bourbon not only account for those moments when knocking it back neat coincides with a flowering awareness of women but also with the existential condition endemic to persons living in the twentieth century. Living in "the fogged-in disoriented Western world" breeds discontent and, more relevant to his essay, drinking outside of (or despite) a highfalutin aesthetic. I will return to the potentially dangerous fallout in elevating southern drinking into something aesthetic after some necessary historical and cultural contextualization.

The timeline is significant in how and where it historically situates Percy's drinking recollections and in how these moments affect the cultural relationship between region, class, and masculinity. The first two dates, 1926 and 1933, betray more than the remembered childish naiveté to drinking, mainly because they are set during Prohibition. As a child of nine or ten in 1926, Percy lives "in Birmingham, in the exurbs" near the sixth hole at the New Country Club golf course. His father, "disdaining both the bathtub gin and white lightning of the time," distills to his own elevated tastes, a slightly absurd notion considering the circumstances. Because they live outside of Birmingham (bootlegged liquor was clustered in cities), liquor—even bathtub gin and white lightning—is presumably scarce, necessitating a home set-up such as this. That Percy's father eschews gin and white lighting because of their taste or quality is a bit farcical.

Such a detail suggests that, like Percy himself, his father also fashions himself a connoisseur, favoring taste and refinement over pharmacological effects. But their living circumstances suggest an affected bourbon aesthetic that perhaps undercuts his father's preference for "good" bourbon based solely on taste. Though they clearly possess material comforts—the number 6 fairway is but a few steps away—Percy's statement that they live at the *New* Country Club is significant; the old money Mountain Brook aristocracy might as well be on a different planet as far as the social economics of Prohibition are concerned. Perhaps good bourbon is available to those living near the Old Country Club, but not to the Percys. The only way to drink aesthetically is to distance oneself from the prodigious supply of country rotgut (swilled only for the purposes of intoxication) and to project knowledge (and, in this case, supply) of "good" bourbon. And the only affordable and available way to obtain such stock for the Percys is through this crude concoction that young Walker recollects fondly. Father Percy's desire to drink good bourbon meets an inevitable roadblock in the very nature of the spirit itself. Like most liquor of any purported quality, bourbon requires aging. This basement whiskey is probably not much better than rotgut, and Mr. Percy's decanter stand of the first siphoned batch suggests that either his palette does not possess the acuity of his Old Country Club counterparts or that, more likely, the liquor tastes terrible. Already, Percy's aesthetics of bourbon should be understood as stemming from a personal history rooted in affectation and false pretenses, both deeply woven into notions of social class consciousness.

The 1933 example further solidifies the link between class and aesthetics as they pertain to drinking. By this time—the last year of Prohibition—the already weak law barely held sway. "My uncle's sun parlor in the Mississippi Delta" is distant from any city. Now, they drink "toddies on a Sunday afternoon," a detail which suggests that the quality of liquor they drink is

of acceptable degree. Percy's migration to his uncle's also serves to boost the impressionable teenager up the social class ladder—note that toddies are taken on a sun porch, drunk from crystal vessels, the sugar in which is stirred with silver spoons. During these Depression years, not surprisingly, talk turns to politics, and it is no accident that Percy shares details of the conversations concerning FDR and "his class." The "talk, tinkle, talk" makes the doctoring of the toddy indistinguishable from the political banter—the aesthetics of Uncle Percy's bourbon not only require literal taste but a political sensibility, particularly one recognizing how class affects economics and vice versa. Now, drinking becomes something more than material signifier of high culture (though it still retains such status), but the liquid compass leading to other cultural avenues available to the South's materially affluent. To drink aesthetically is to drink good bourbon and this ritual offers myriad social and cultural privileges.

The next two dates in the timeline, 1934 and 1935, differ from the previous in two important ways. First, drinking is now legal after Prohibition's repeal. Second, Percy is himself now initiated into the culture of drink. As a university student, the bourbon he drinks is not of a high quality ("It's awful."), though his hot-faced reaction to Coke bottle pulls in the bathroom might stem as much from his novice liquor experience as much as from the whiskey itself. Nevertheless, this episode shows a southern ritual of masculinity enacted through alcohol. The "boys in bi-swing jackets and tab collars" bond through the passing of the bottle, as much as they do from their shared fear of rejection from female co-eds. The next year, though equally petrified by beautiful women, his drinking ritual is more evolved and moves toward the realm of the aesthetic that he recalls from his uncle's sun parlor, for "by now" he drinks "from a proper concave hip flask (a long way from the Delta Coke bottle) with a hinged top." Note that there is no mention of a hot-faced reaction to the bourbon itself. His non-reaction to the liquor shows an

evolution that parallels his growth within the aesthetic culture of bourbon drinking. Percy's confidence with women remains disproportionate to his steady assimilation into the masculine white, upper-crust culture of drinking in the South.

Both aesthetics of bourbon—the religious and the damned—are implicated in Percy's personal drinking history. The latter of the two, however, requires a closer look in its categorical amalgamation of masculine southern self-identity, particularly in its evoking of Faulkner as its figurehead. Consider some of Percy's terminology: Faulkner is "over the edge and out of it," feeling "a little phony" despite adhering to the "honorable passing up [of] the does" on the hunt. The only remedy to such a condition? He "flatfoots about a third of [a pint of bourbon]" whereupon "he shivers … but not from the cold" (105). Notice what is absent to the aesthete of damnation: the tinkle of silver on crystal, a political stance, or any dreamy fusion of women mixed with the hypnotic scent of bourbon. For Faulkner, whose southern masculinity seems a bit affected—at least in Percy's caricature—drinking bourbon occurs outside of the aesthetic realm offered through the material comforts of gentility and ritual. Faulkner's Delta sun porch is a cold wet hunting camp, mirroring his discontent stemming from "the fogged-in disoriented Western world." He remains deeply unsatisfied, and the remedy to this condition projects damnation. What Percy says without saying it is that, with *this* drinking, Faulkner is damned, though this damnation hardly serves the aesthetic realm, for Faulkner, even in caricature, drinks problematically.

To backtrack for a moment: earlier in the essay, Percy delineates between the two types of bourbon drinkers who may (not) find his analysis interesting:

> Not only should connoisseurs of bourbon not read this article, neither should persons preoccupied with the perils of alcoholism, cirrhosis, esophageal hemorrhage, cancer of the palate, and so forth—all real enough dangers. I, too, deplore these afflictions. But, as between these evils and the aesthetic of Bourbon

> drinking, that is, the use of Bourbon to warm the heart, to reduce the anomie of the late twentieth century, to cure the cold phlegm of Wednesday afternoons, I choose the aesthetic (102-103).

Percy's choice of language here is telling as it pertains to the dangerous consequences of habitual drinking. Bourbon drinking divides itself into two opposing categories, one "evil," the other aesthetic. Dwelling on the former, "preoccupation" with the "perils" and "afflictions" born of bourbon consumption clouds Percy's romanticized aesthetic. For him, bourbon magnifies (southern) masculinity through the ritual of drinking it, something that initiates the young man into an exclusive cavalier-themed fraternity. But drinking aesthetically also, according to Percy's verbiage, intoxicates, not to the point of physiological drunkenness but to the point of existential distraction. Living in the late twentieth century means, as Binx Bolling, the protagonist and narrator in Percy's *The Moviegoer* (1961) might say, existing in a state of malaise. Modern existence produces anxiety, confusion, and dis-ease, and such desperation can be made less taxing by drinking aesthetically; reminiscing about Sunday toddies and the youthful bliss in the Birmingham suburbs comes easily when drinking bourbon, neat. What Percy glosses over too quickly, however, is how the "evils" of drinking are born from this aesthetic.

Before moving into his personal drinking biography, Percy offers the following disclaimer:

> An apology to the reader is in order … if I should encourage potential alcoholics to start knocking back Bourbon neat.… Because I am, happily and unhappily, endowed with a bad GI tract, diverticulosis, neurotic colon, and a mild recurring nausea, which make it less likely for me to become an alcoholic than my healthier fellow Americans. I can hear from the reader now: Who is he kidding? If this joker had to knock back five shots of Bourbon every afternoon just to stand the twentieth century, he's already an alcoholic. Very well, I submit to this or any semantic (104).

One quickly detects his glib tone, for he clearly does not believe himself to be an alcoholic, particularly since he previously clusters the "evils" of drinking physiologically. The deplorable

"afflictions" of the body include alcoholism, though a moment later he concludes that such conditions "make it less likely for me to become an alcoholic." A trained physician, it is no surprise that Percy is mindful of the effects of drinking. This awareness, I argue, problematizes the romantic stock he assigns to drinking aesthetically, particularly since he claims to be *choosing* to consume in this way. Percy must acknowledge that not everyone can make such a choice (at least while ignoring the physiological consequences of drinking), and the regional-cultural stamp (i.e., white, southern, male, upper-crust) he applies to bourbon drinking makes this oversight dangerous. After all, what potentially happens when bourbon drinking is aestheticized, especially for impressionable young men with a regional and familial heritage to preserve? The grim reality is that they become, not by any choice, afflicted by the evils previously mentioned. They become alcoholics. Percy ignores the "evils" in his culture of aesthetic bourbon. Defining bourbon as a cultural touchstone knights southern-ness, masculinity, and social class, and the posturing that accompanies these aesthetics will eventually give way to harmful physiological effects. In Percy's South, what comes first, the angst or the alcohol? In either case, drinking under the aegis of some cultural prescription is perilous for people like Faulkner and the afflicted. If Percy's bourbon is trumpeted as the remedy for existential dis-ease, then, for many, disease is sure to follow, calling into question the use of alcohol as an aesthetic cultural marker of southern manhood. When aesthetics are trumped up without thought to their consequences, they become dangerous. In this project, I examine those writers who are not connoisseurs of bourbon (i.e., aesthetes like Percy), but rather those mindful of *too much* connoisseurship.

No wonder, then, that Percy offers up Bill F. as his model of damnation, since Faulkner never escaped such damnation; the perils of his affliction became too much to overcome, and

alcoholism compromised his health. Where is the aesthetic to be celebrated in *that*? Whether or not the South wanted to accept a (northern, outside) challenge to a cultural tenet it considered sacred, the Friends of Bill F. began to reinterpret how alcohol and drinking functioned as celebrated norms of Dixie culture. Walker Percy makes no apologies for the intertwined privilege that accompanies bourbon, but the writers I examine do, for they have, I argue, considerable difficulty reconciling their birthright with a regional aversion to the call for social change. Bill F. and friends resist aestheticizing alcohol and drinking since this symbolic embodiment (the gentrified southern gentleman) has long been the perpetuator of the South's stance on social change. Percy's aesthetic take on drinking, masculinity, and class need not speak for his own stance on the South's hesitance to embrace progress, though "Bourbon" does show the danger in exalting the centrality that ritual imbibing occupies in the southern imaginary, particularly as it fails to account for how Percy's spot atop the southern hierarchy affords him such warm recollection of drinking. Not only are the North Carolina Delta Boys the ones whom Faulkner, Warren, and McCarthy gaze upon with scrutiny and, often, disdain but they are also the ones who become alcoholics, precisely because they are indoctrinated into a culture of bottle passing that is believed to be without danger or consequence. I argue that the South is unique to other regions in such conflicted views on alcohol and drinking, or at least in the myths stemming from these views. And in a region so infamously rife with hypocrisy, it is no wonder that alcohol and drinking—with histories in the region that are plenty dramatic—are identified as the symbols through which white, male southern writers of privilege offer their critique of the South relative to progress.

In chapter one of this project, "'Eight years on the wagon': Alcoholism and Social Progress in *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*," I situate Faulkner's representations of alcohol

and drinking in *Sanctuary* (1931) and its sequel *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) in their historical contexts, Prohibition and post-Repeal respectively. Through the altered drinking patterns exhibited in the novels' two recurring characters, Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens, Faulkner uses evolving notions of alcoholism to critique the South's ability (or lack thereof) to embrace social progress. Congruent to the changing ways that alcoholism as a disease was understood in the nation's broader consciousness was also the way that problem drinking altered perceptions of class and gender, two categories that underwent substantial reconfiguration as the South moved into the twentieth-century. Faulkner's appropriation of the disease concept of alcoholism is fundamental to his critique of a region where hegemony was perpetuated by the hypocrisy of "moral" legislation (Prohibition), as the South simultaneously demonized drinking yet benefitted from it. As not-so-recovered alcoholics negotiating the rapids of a modernizing nation-state from a place of drunken confusion, Temple and Gowan remain ill-equipped to participate in the modernizing economy, something Leigh Anne Duck attributes to the region's stubbornly "backward" glance at history and progress.

Where I argue that Faulkner uses alcohol and drinking to betray a biting critique of a region (and two individuals) seemingly incapable of embracing progress, in chapter two, "'Something besides a corroded liver': Jack B.'s Alcoholic Narrative in *All the King's Men*," I consider two different problem drinkers and their troubling relation to modernity in the South, though in Robert Penn Warren's novel the overriding metaphor for social progress and drinking is *recovery*. In this chapter, I argue that Jack Burden's first-person account of Willie Stark amounts to a recovery narrative, much like those in Alcoholics Anonymous' eponymous "Big Book." I suggest that Jack can only be deemed successful in his charge "to confront the awful responsibility of Time" after he faces the demons of addiction that plague both him and Stark.

By centralizing their literal addictions to alcohol, I argue that Jack makes larger moves to portray these addictions metaphorically; Stark's populist political agenda prevents social, political, and economic progress, while Jack cannot properly confront the demons of his past. Because Stark never overcomes his alcoholism, his vision for the state is destroyed, while Jack's sobriety allows him the existential clarity to reconcile his complicated past with a hopeful vision for the future.

Chapter three, "'He always called you a rummy': *Suttree*'s Alcoholic Economy of Suffering," views alcoholism and recovery through a postwar economic paradigm, arguing that the alcoholic drinking occurring among society's marginalized signifies *Suttree*'s critique of a modern capitalist privileging of overconsumption as the material marker of progress. Cornelius Suttree and his disinherited cohorts imbibe in an excess mirroring the ostentatious materialism of society's affluent, and these alcoholics represent the dismal conditions laid out by supposedly progressive political measures through the tragic confluence of addiction and marginalization. These people suffer—greatly—and alcoholism not only leads them to painful and violent ends but, in line with Cormac McCarthy's broader critique of postwar consumerism, prevents them from meaningful participation in America's modernizing economy. Suttree's battle with addiction challenges notions that his final flight at novel's end actually, in the words of one influential critic, "affirms life."

Suttree's escape (momentarily) suggests that he overcomes his addiction and has put behind him the antagonism he feels toward his privileged birthright. For the rough and tumble drinking men who populate the fiction of contemporary Grit Lit writers Larry Brown, Harry Crews, and Lewis Nordan, no such flight or self-improvement is even available. In the project's conclusion, "'This can't be living': Post-Recovery in the Grit Lit South," I leap forward to the

next generation of southern writers who centralize alcohol and drinking in their work. In these Grit Lit texts, drinking has become so normalized that it hardly registers on the narrative as anything aberrant, which, I argue, shows that, for both individual and region, recovery is all but impossible to achieve in the South. I argue that the pathological distance between their rural world and a world that recognizes alcoholism as a disease signifies how fleeting a concept recovery proves to be, and only upon leaving the region does such a concept prove tenable. Thus, these writers are friends of neither Bill W. nor Bill F., since literal sobriety is scarcely available to persons of a place that is effectively cut off from the rest of the region and nation.

Chapter One

"Eight years on the wagon": Alcoholism and Recovery in *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*

> The South which Faulkner had grown up in—particularly the rural South—was cut-off, inward-turning, backward-looking. It was a culture frozen in its virtues and vices, and even for the generation that grew up after World War I, that South offered an image of massive immobility in all ways, an image, if one was romantic, of the unchangeableness of the human condition, beautiful, sad, painful, tragic—sunlight slanting over a mellow autumn field, a field more precious for the fact that its yield had been meagre.
>
> Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: Past and Future."

> Elegance, *esprit,* culture? Virginia has no art, no literature, no philosophy, no mind or aspiration of her own. Her education has sunk to the Baptist seminary level … Urbanity, *politesse,* chivalry? Go to! It was in Virginia that they invented the device of searching for contraband whiskey in women's underwear…
>
> Henry Louis Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart"

William Faulkner's short story "Uncle Willy" (1935) reveals how addiction misunderstood proves harmful for both the individual addict and the community at-large. Uncle Willy is a morphine addict whose reform becomes the mission of local churchgoers. When he shoots dope, Willy's eyes "kind of run together like broken eggs" as the boys gathering around witness "his Sunday shirt rolled up and the needle going slow into his blue arm" (227). The church members intervene and "took him to Memphis" where "they said he was going to die" (231). When Willy returns "cured," he turns to alcohol to placate the addiction. The results are disastrous, and his drinking becomes the problem of the whole town: "It was worse than if he had started dope again. You would have thought *he had brought smallpox to town*" (236, emphasis mine). Faulkner's language conflates Willy's literal addiction (alcohol) and the town's figurative disease (smallpox). As Willy's reactions to his treatment for addiction become less predictable, the community begins suffering as a result of his drinking, and what were once quaint, stable town relations become abruptly unhinged. Again, the church attempts to intercede—Mrs. Merridew says, "'I am going to take you to Keeley and if that fails, I am going to take you … to an asylum" (238)—though it becomes clear that nothing will cure Uncle Willy,

since his disease symbolizes more than a physiological affliction, pointing instead to a broader, societal incapacity to grasp the problem.

As a narrative[1] of addiction (told in the first-person through the eyes of a fourteen-year-old boy), "Uncle Willy" speaks to the disconnect between the outside perception of addiction and the grim reality of such a diseased condition for the afflicted. From the onset, Willy is misunderstood as merely "crazy," an eccentric recluse with little bearing on the community's well-being. When he attends Sunday School, for example, "Mr. Barbour … never called on him" (227). Stoned into senseless oblivion among the throng of pious churchgoers, Willy becomes easier to accept only when he is dismissed; that is, until "they made him quit dope," an act of charity ostensibly meant to rid Willy of his habit. The push and pull between Willy and the church members shows the severity of his condition—"this time it didn't go into his arm slow, it looked like he was trying to jab it clean through the bone" (230)—something lost on his rehabilitators. As Willy's disease metastasizes, the town's inability to cure him comes to symbolize its shortsightedness when addressing any problem threatening its stability. From morphine, to alcohol, to an obsession with flying, Willy cannot simply be weaned from his vices, and it comes as no surprise that his newest addiction consumes him in a solo plane crash. The narrator's guilt at his role in Willy's death is assuaged only by the self-realization that "I did help Uncle Willy," something the rest of the community could not do.

But how Willy might be "helped" remains obscured, since, in reality, nothing can help an addict in this town. Willy's condition remains a medically modern one, as the *disease* of addiction was not fully understood as such until after the time in which the story is set. Willy's desire to fly away highlights the tension between his disease and the town's inability to

1 Because the narrator is naïve to the implications of addiction, Willy's illness is presented without the adjectival pejoratives that are often present in portrayals of addiction.

conceptualize it, a tension which exacerbates the hopelessness of an addict living among the well-to-do churchgoers of an insulated, southern town: "Uncle Willy may have escaped Jefferson but he had just dodged it; he hadn't gotten away" (240). Indeed, as Willy can never actually escape the small town monotony through any of his preferred forms of self-medication, his only recourse is death. Although the narrator cannot grasp the enormity of his own admission, he nonetheless possesses a greater sense of understanding the inevitable consequences of Willy's disease than does the rest of the town. Faulkner is also guilty of the town's inability to diagnose and treat, since he is heavily influenced by the dominant conceptions of the day and by the historical limitations regarding addiction at this time. Faulkner's fiction investigates the South's confrontation with modernity as a broader narrative of addiction-as-disease unfolded in the years following Prohibition.

Of all of the southern writers considered in this project, Faulkner provides perhaps the clearest example of how historical moment and regional culture intertwine in crisis. Many of Bill F.'s temporal concerns in both *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* center on how the South confronts the unforeseen fallout stemming from a modernizing nation. Faulkner's Jefferson undergoes profound cultural, material, and social revision as it plods through the Depression and World War II. These changes invite more discord than harmony, as the clash of southern tradition with encroaching modernity produces a societal malaise with which Faulkner seemed to grapple for his entire writing life. Indeed, much of his work sought, in various ways that touched on matters of race, politics, land ownership, et cetera, to diagnose what *ailed* the South. Such ailments suggest that the South was, in fact, "diseased," and hopelessly so, since a precise diagnosis remained elusive as regional attitudes about social progress stalled in the waters of

backward looking tradition. Faulkner's diseased South infected individual southerners as well, and these afflictions were manifested as addiction.

Joseph Blotner's biography of William Faulkner is soaked with references to the author's notorious drinking, underscoring not only the prevalence of alcoholic consumption in Faulkner's life but the disastrous effect that it had on his relationships and, in the end, his health. The emphasis on Faulkner's drinking simultaneously casts the author as the celebrated stereotypical figure of the white southern artist—replete with bourbon drunk neat, pipe in hand, tattered tweed jacket representing the travails of a struggling writer—and, more seriously, a person who struggled with alcoholism from an early age. Much has been made of Faulkner the drinker. In his work on modernist writers and drinking, *The Thirsty Muse* (1991), Tom Dardis argues that Faulkner and other canonical modernists compromised their work by drinking, a notion shared by other critics such as John W. Crowley and Thomas B. Gilmore.[2] The biographical link between drinking and the fiction emerging from it proves informative, though the significance of such a connection is lessened when alcohol plays only a minor role in the narrative. Crowley's work, *The White Logic*, takes the next step in examining how race, class, and gender inform literary representations of drinking.

Surprisingly, most work pertaining to Faulkner's drinking has centered almost exclusively on biography, despite his work offering such varied representations of alcohol and drinking. The question arises as to whether or not the ubiquity of drinking in the Faulkner oeuvre merely reaffirms the celebrated cultural trope of the boozed southern white writer or hints at

[2] Gilmore departs significantly from the work of Dardis in that, like John W. Crowley after him, the authors' personal drinking histories are not central to his analysis: "that the authors were heavy or alcoholic drinkers is important mainly as it adds authority to their depictions of drinking" (7). His analysis approaches mine most closely in his examination of *The Iceman Cometh*, particularly as "throughout the play the principles of AA provide excellent tools for examining Hickey's salesmanship in order to determine the quality of his new product or 'line,' sobriety" (49).

something deeper about alcohol consumption in a region with such a complicated drinking history. Most of the drinking in Faulkner's work casts a serious pall on the characters and events transpiring during great social and cultural upheaval in the South. In *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), for example, Jason Compson, Sr.'s alcoholism not only kills him but also, as Gary Storhoff argues,[3] exacerbates his family's neuroses to such a degree that the Compsons' disintegration becomes the logical manifestation of alcoholic co-dependency between enabler and enabled. Many other examples abound, enough to consider if such representations of drinking function as something beyond mere characterization. Two novels in particular consider the deeper ramifications of alcohol and drinking, *Sanctuary* and its "sequel" published twenty years later, *Requiem for a Nun*. These novels are written against the backdrops of shifting national discourse about alcohol and feature two of Faulkner's most notorious drinkers, Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens.

Besides these recurring characters, the two novels offer insight into the shifting ways that alcohol registered in the national consciousness. The chronological gap between publications (among other things) helps explain the markedly different portrayals of drinking, and it is within such distinct portrayals that the novels offer strong cultural critique of the South's resistance to social change occurring elsewhere at this time. This chapter seeks to do several things. First, it situates both *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* in their respective historical contexts (Prohibition and the post-war South, respectively) to define how progress is understood in these chronologically distinct Souths. The concept of "progress" becomes particularly elusive here

[3] Using the metaphor of the "infinite loop"—a computer science term where a faulty program perpetuates an unsolvable algorithm—Storhoff argues that the entire Compson family is mired in desperate perpetuity as a consequence of Jason Compson, Sr.'s alcoholism. The traumas of membership in the alcoholic family, true to the properties of the infinite loop, manifest themselves in adulthood as they did in childhood. Caddy's neuroses, then, are the logical result of encounters with her father, since she manages the family when no one else can. Storhoff's evocation of the "alcoholic family" models itself similarly to Lori Rotskoff's treatment of the "alcoholic marriage" examined later in this chapter.

since, as Leigh Anne Duck argues, the seeds of social change outside of the South flowered as southern socio-cultural "backwardness" persisted within, challenged unsuccessfully from inside or outside the region. Second, and along a similar historical trajectory, this chapter traces the nation's changing attitudes about drinking, suggesting that the fallout from Prohibition and Repeal significantly altered the contours of how consumption was perceived. Finally, it argues that Faulkner's representations of drinking in characterizing Temple and Gowan are fundamental to how the novels convey the South's hesitance to embrace progress, particularly through the ways in which social class, gender, and race are addressed. Duck situates the South's social stagnation as something antithetical to, yet somehow encouraged by, the rest of the nation's move toward a liberal state: "While associating the nation with democracy and change and the [South] with racism and tradition, twentieth-century U.S. nationalism repeatedly celebrated the latter paradigm, failing either to address its incongruity with liberalism or to analyze the desires that rendered this restricted model of collectivity attractive to so many national audiences" (3). Southern backwardness, then, was a regional stereotype servicing both North and South in matters pertaining to social progress. Faulkner's critique identifies how regional aversion to social change is manifested in the characters' alcoholisms, representing both a physiological disease afflicting individuals as well as a figurative one infecting the entire South.

Drunk and Disorderly: *Sanctuary*'s Prohibition

Critic Francois Pitavy remarks of *Sanctuary*, "Prohibition so saturates the narrative that it comes to inform it—to control its very writing. From subject matter, [P]rohibition becomes a governing concept ordering the narrative—at once what is told and what must remain untold" (1). Lost in some of the novel's more sensational scenes—Temple's rape with a corncob in particular—is the fact that *Sanctuary*, true to Pitavy's claim, *is* unmistakably about Prohibition.

The central plot—Temple's abduction, Benbow's recovery of her, and the fallout of her perjury at Lee Goodwin's trial—relies on the outward signifiers of Prohibition, and this presence marks the text importantly as a novel set in and responding to the milieu propagated by the Volstead Act. For example, Popeye, the novel's most clearly defined villain, surfaces from the public's insatiable appetite for illegal booze. His appearance distinguishes him from the rest of the rural moonshiners with whom he interacts, from his black suit to his "depthless" and "bloodless" presence. He drives a customized car, designed specifically to run liquor from rural production sites to urban consumption hubs without being pursued by the law. In the Memphis, Miss Reba's brothel functions as the gathering place for illicit consumption and prostitution, and she unabashedly counts corrupt police officers, judges, and politicians among her loyal clientele. Implicit in Pitavy's claim is how Prohibition forced the South to confront modernity, as class interactions between Jefferson's social elite and the peripheral figures emerging in response to outlawed liquor produced lasting effects at both the individual and societal levels.

Against this world ordered by corruption, attorney Horace Benbow fights to preserve a measure of order and justice. Benbow first encounters Popeye and the rest of the throng of illegal liquor producers one night during his drunken participation of bottle-passing at the Old Frenchman Place.[4] Shortly after, the bootlegger Tommy is murdered by Popeye, and Lee Goodwin, leader of the moonshining crew, is arrested for the crime. Benbow agrees to defend

[4] Benbow's awkward encounter with Popeye at the beginning of the novel introduces some recurring themes regarding how class realignment relates to the economics of Prohibition. As Horace becomes increasingly candid with every sip, Ruby's asides reveal the unnatural sense of this social interaction: "'That fool … What does he want … He better get on to where he's going, where *his* women folks can take care of him" (13, emphasis mine). Implicit in her anxiety is the unease of *her* men carousing with a Jefferson lawyer. Is she worried about the illegality of this ritual drinking? Probably not, though Benbow's willing participation speaks more to the judicial and legislative impotence of Prohibition. This episode also reveals the gendered specificity that marked shared consumption at this time. Crowley states that the drinking man "enjoys a homosocial intimacy with other men that exists nowhere outside the world of the bottle" (28). The nature of Benbow's drunken chatter affirms the comfort men found when drinking among themselves, as he reveals (to complete strangers) his neuroses concerning his marriage and his feelings for his stepdaughter.

Goodwin, though the case is fundamentally weakened through his client's refusal to name Popeye as the perpetrator. Furthermore, Horace's defense meets constant resistance from, of all places, his sister Narcissa and the rest of the conservative Baptist women who disapprove of Goodwin and his girlfriend, the former prostitute Ruby Lamar. The case takes a complicated turn after Ruby reveals that the missing local college student, Temple Drake, was present at the house the night of the murder and that she has been kidnapped by Popeye. As Horace pursues leads, he encounters corruption at every turn, most notably in the crooked senator Clarence Snopes. Despite Benbow's idealism and his client's innocence, the forces profiting from Prohibition prevail: in order to preserve her family's high standing, Temple perjures herself on the stand and Goodwin is lynched. Ruby and her baby are once again marginalized to Jefferson's outskirts, and Horace is left only with a loveless marriage and the memory of his futile attempt at justice. Benbow aptly summarizes: "'I need a change. Either I, or Mississippi, one'" (Faulkner 134).

The dramatic events in the novel betray a region under the siege of corruption; pervasive violence precludes any hope of orderly reconciliation between entrenched power and those subject to it. Blotner describes the world of *Sanctuary* as a kind of "wasteland" (269), and the decay is moral, social, and political, infecting everything from church to brothel. While Prohibition alone cannot be responsible for the entire state of affairs, the implication is that the figurative economy arising due to illegal consumption—at the very least—destabilizes Jefferson's social hierarchy. While nearly everyone contributes to Jefferson's moral implosion in some way (Narcissa and the rest of the Baptist women are vilified as much anyone else), Faulkner's most damaging indictment of a region unable to confront social change is symbolized in a younger generation that possesses the capacity to embrace progress, yet does not. Faulkner embodies this frustration in the (often) deplorable actions of Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens.

Faulkner's treatment of these characters, shows the South to be ill-equipped to encounter modernity so long as it cleaves to antiquated class and gender prescriptions. In Temple and Gowan, Faulkner uses alcohol as the cultural signifier for a region whose social hegemony was in flux. Their consumption marks the region as something more serious than a regressive counterpoint to a liberal nation-state, exposing the South as "a site from which antimodern and antidemocratic beliefs could spread" (Duck 80). According to Duck, the threat of fascism abroad shifts southern alterity from the acceptable realm of longstanding cultural backwardness to something that now threatened the stability of the nation at-large.

Discussion of alcohol as it relates to a tenuous southern culture in the novel must begin with the most egregious problem drinker, Gowan Stevens. Gowan is a minor character; his presence accounts for barely one quarter of the text, and, on the surface, he is merely the catalyst responsible for Temple's encounter with Popeye. His intentions seem, if a bit annoying, benign. Gowan is described as wearing "flannels and a blue coat; a broad, plumpish young man with a swaggering air, vaguely collegiate" (Faulkner 24). Faulkner continues:

> Stevens came in with his sleek head, his plump, assured face. Miss Jenny gave him her hand and he bent fatly and kissed it.
>
> "Getting younger and prettier every day," he said. "I was just telling Narcissa that if you'd just get up out of that chair and be my girl she wouldn't have a chance."
>
> ……
>
> "How do you do, sir," Stevens said. He gave Benbow's hand a quick, hard, high, close grip (25).

Horace is not impressed by what he sees to be a disingenuous display of sincerity: "'The Virginia gentleman one, who told us at supper that night about how they had taught him to drink like a gentleman. Put a beetle in alcohol and you have a scarab: put a Mississippian in alcohol, and you have a gentleman—" (26-27). From his costumed appearance to his overly polite demeanor, Gowan's airs make it difficult for Horace and Jenny to take him seriously as a suitor to Narcissa,

let alone as the gentleman he purports to be. Also, note Horace's cynicism regarding Gowan's gentlemanly prop: alcohol. Horace recognizes the irony in Gowan's "Virginia gentleman" façade[5] and the boozed prop by which he is so quick to identify himself.

Gowan's consumption occupies a significant place in the novel, one that aligned itself historically with young persons at this time and exposed a fragile connection between white southern masculinity and alcohol. Gowan's drinking is distinct from the rest of the characters in the novel, speaking to the myriad ways that Prohibition redefined social-economic class characteristics through illicit consumption. Although alcohol consumption declined in the 1930s, according to John W. Crowley, "it likely increased among young and educated city dwellers, in whose sophisticated circles heavy drinking was not merely tolerated, but actively encouraged" (40). These "educated city dwellers" describe Gowan, a clear indicator of how social class informed the perception of how one drank. Crowley highlights a difference in the class dynamics of consumption during Prohibition: "Simply because it became illicit, drinking possessed a singular importance; drinking in defiance of Prohibition was a sign of solidarity with the rising generation's resistance to what it called 'puritanism' and to what it considered to be the oppression of bourgeois American life" (37).

After Gowan's initial introduction, his identity as "Virginia gentleman" begins to materialize, exposing the glaring contradiction between his projected identity and the way he

[5] Southern historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown cites the ideals of southern honor as combining equal parts appearance, behavior, self-identification, and perception by others. He ascribes three basic components to honor: the inner conviction of self-worth, the claim of that self-assessment before the public, and the public's reaction to it (14). Acting honorably (I equate "honor" with "gentleman"), required that the individual perform appropriately in the public domain, externally projecting his honor from within. The gentleman's act of societal recognition required the dynamic interaction between two parties: the gentleman was validated as such only when another person confirmed this. According to historian Kenneth Greenberg, persons of honor "project themselves through how they look and what they say. They are treated honorably when their projections are respected and accepted as true. The central issue to men in such a culture is not the nature of some underlying reality but the *acceptance of their projections*" (7, emphasis mine). The public role in affirming honor cannot be underplayed in the case of Gowan Stevens, for it is in his performative gesture for public affirmation that Faulkner shows the irony of his so-called "gentlemanly" self.

acts. At first, Gowan's actions cast him in a comic light— how can he *really* believe that his behavior inspires confidence that he is a gentleman? His interaction with the townspeople in his pursuit of liquor soon becomes anything but comic, however, particularly as it exposes tense social class relations. The narrative describes the social divide between the townspeople and the university students—Temple rides in cars with the townies (students are not allowed to have cars), though these same driving men peer at her enviously through the windows of the Letter Club dances, "drink[ing] from flasks" (Faulkner 29). In order to procure liquor for tomorrow's baseball game in Starkville, Gowan solicits three townspeople, and it is here that his gentlemanly façade first meets resistance. He approaches the men: "'I'm a stranger here,' Gowan said. 'I ran out of liquor tonight, and I've got a date early in the morning. Can you gentlemen tell me where I could get a quart'" (31). Moments later:

> "They cant seem to make good liquor down here like they do up at school," Gowan said.
> "Where you from?" the third said.
> "Virgin—oh, Jefferson. I went to school at Virginia. Teach you how to drink, there" (32).

Note Gowan's supposed preoccupation with "good" liquor[6], an absurd notion given the climate of production during Prohibition when *any* liquor should be considered good. The tension in the situation increases after Gowan's first drink:

> "Good God," [Gowan] said, "how do you fellows drink this stuff?"
> "We dont drink rotgut at Virginia," Doc said. Gowan turned in the seat and looked at him.
> "Shut up, Doc," the third said. "Dont mind him," he said. "He's had a bellyache all night."

[6] Sean S. McKeithan identifies two archetypal southern drinkers, the gentleman and the good old boy. Each falls on opposite sides of the social class divide and consumes Bourbon in accordance to his social and material affluence. The "gentleman, with his roots in the moonlight-and-magnolia planter ideal" is of the Maker's Mark class, where "the good old boy, his backcountry cousin" drinks Early Times. Gowan clearly fashions himself a member of the former category, and his ensuing performance speaks to an affected type of southern masculinity related closely to the manner in which he drinks.

> "Son bitch," Doc said.
> "Did you call me that?" Gowan said (33).

Central to the tension in this scene is the class difference between Gowan and the townies. Ever the Virginia gentleman, Gowan's concerns are not only with obtaining booze but with its quality. Being educated separates Gowan from the three men in ways that give Doc "a bellyache all night"; mainly, Gowan's class privilege grants him access to the Temple Drakes of Jefferson, while their appeal to her begins and ends with hitched rides.

Gowan's classed identity as gentleman necessitates that he upholds this constructed persona, particularly when his masculinity is challenged. Now that Gowan has procured the requisite liquor, his task is seemingly complete, despite the fact that he disapproves of the rotgut's quality. Curiously, he remains with the three men, consuming at a dangerous pace. At the Shack, Gowan makes whiskey sours, admitting that it "'hasn't got much kick, to me'" (33) as he refills the glass. He continues: "'Have another, gentlemen,' he said, filling his glass again. The others helped themselves *moderately*. 'Up at school they consider it better to go down than to hedge,' he said. They watched him drink that one. They saw his nostrils bead suddenly with sweat" (33, emphasis mine). With at least three strong drinks consumed in a short period, Gowan's performance of masculinity quickly becomes a problem of personal safety. By now, though, he is too deeply invested in his performance to stop. When Doc attempts to cut him off, Gowan strongly resists: "'Watch this.' He poured into the fourth glass. They watched the liquor rise. 'Look out, fellow,' the third said. Gowan filled the glass level full and lifted it and emptied it steadily" (34). He blacks out, awakening in frightful condition the next morning: "Then his abdominal muscles completed the retch upon which he had lost consciousness and he heaved himself up and sprawled into the foot of the car, banging his head on the door.… He rose and ran on, in his stained dinner jacket, his burst collar and broken hair. I passed out, he thought in a kind of rage, I passed out. *I passed out*" (35). The damage done to his manhood

cannot be overstated, since drinking functions as *the* performative signifier of his white masculinity here. Gowan's neurosis stems from threats to this masculinity, emerging from an entrenched notion of social class superiority born out of a time long preceding Prohibition. If Gowan's gentlemanly self cannot enact his role as a southern white man, then the constructs of his privileged identity quickly prove to be false, unmasking the performance. The consequences for Gowan are dire. Susan Zieger traces a similar masculine insecurity from nineteenth-century southern novels: "Lying emasculates the male protagonist in [the novel], since a southern man's honor was supposed to be based on his truthfulness" (129).

Passing out signifies an inability to hold liquor as well as a falsity to Gowan's pronounced identity as an honorable southern man. The socio-cultural value of Gowan's whiteness also deserves scrutiny as a signifier of his social currency, since his identity as gentleman relies on the acceptance of his race and class superiority. The irony in what critic Jay Watson identifies to be this act of "performing" whiteness[7] is that Gowan's drinking actually reconfigures his white masculinity into something inherently threatening to himself and, subsequently, Temple. The figure of the "Virginia gentleman" has long ceased[8] to hold cultural purchase in the South. Gowan's self-identification

[7] Relying on Richard Dyer's influential work in the field, Watson identifies three nodes in whiteness scholarship: subject formation, performativity, and ideology. Speaking to the performance aspect of whiteness, Watson writes that for whiteness to be made visible—dislocating its racial familiarity as something neutral, given, understood—it must "turn from the formation to the performance … of social subjects and groups that don't seem to get their whiteness right. Such performances, whether inadvertent or deliberately subversive, have the potential to expose and disrupt the operation of normative whiteness" (9). Watson cites the emergence of "white trash" as a categorical offshoot to whiteness. Although Gowan clearly eludes such definition, his performance of Virginia gentleman nevertheless projects an aberration working against white normativity.

[8] Wyatt-Brown distinguishes between gentlemen from the North and those from the South as they exuded "gentility," a characteristic of the honorable man combining moral uprightness and social position (40). While the northerner's projection of the virtue relied on "reason," "caution," and "sobriety," the southerner's relied on "warm-heartedness," "generosity," and "expressiveness" (48-49). Honor, then, had a regional quality, and Gowan's brand of it proves to be severely outdated. Chivalrous behavior never went out of fashion, but to identify himself a "gentleman," specifically a Virginia one, shows how out of touch Gowan's performance is with chronological reality. Consider this episode Wyatt-Brown recounts: "…the sobriquet 'Virginia gentleman'… had become so commonplace as early as the second war with Britain in 1812 that it had lost much of its exclusivity. When the Virginia writer Anne Royall traveled through frontier Alabama in 1818, she identified *nearly every fellow countryman as 'gentleman,'* even if he was a tavern-keeper or boatman" (41, emphasis mine). Gowan becomes a caricature of the Virginia gentleman, as the example shows that the

initially proves comic, albeit absurd. This performance, however, absolutely depends on drinking for the desired validation of his white masculinity. Now, the gravity of Gowan's performance comes into clearer focus, as well as one of the "untold" moments where Prohibition-as-context becomes invisible. Gowan's multiple drinking binges (or, perhaps more accurately, his sustained binge) shifts from being a historical anachronism (i.e., a celebrated marker of cavalier culture) to marking his identity as a genuine threat to Temple's well-being and, in a figurative sense, the modernizing South as a whole. Indeed, Gowan's identity as gentleman, harmless initially, flowers into a broader representation of the stagnant South, necessarily forcing a reexamination of "how cultural forms considered anachronistic could coexist in often vital relationships with those recognized as central to modernization" (Duck 7).

Gowan's drinking possesses a scary verisimilitude historically rooted in the evolving ways that consumption occurred at this time. While the impetus for his consumption may have had precedent as an act of rebellious solidarity meant to be the young generation's protest against the conservative ideology informing Prohibition, his imbibing is unique in its frequency and quantity. As Stevens recovers from the previous night, he attempts to sober himself: "His inside coiled coldly, but he raised the jar and drank, guzzling, choking the stuff down, clapping a cigarette into his mouth to restrain the paroxysm. Almost at once he felt better" (Faulkner 36). Temple's reaction to Gowan's drunken, disheveled appearance, elicits a venomous—hardly gentlemanly—response:

> "Trying to come over me with your innocent ways. Don't think I spent last night with a couple of your barber-shop jellies for nothing. Don't think I fed them my liquor just because I'm bighearted. You're pretty good, aren't you? Think you can

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authentic figure (if he ever existed) disappeared more than a century before. Consequently, Gowan's performance becomes nothing more than a kitschy imitation of the genuine, void of any positive characteristics that the original Virginia gentleman might have possessed. Wyatt-Brown aptly summarizes this southern honor: "It established signposts of *appropriate conduct*. It staved off the danger of self-love and vainglory and in circles of the genteel, it elevated *moderation* and learnedness to virtues of *self-disciplined* community service. Since honor gave meaning to lives, *it existed not as a myth* but as a vital code" (62, emphases mine). Stevens possesses none of these characteristics. His greatest subversions of the gentlemanly code of conduct all have one thing in common: his over-consumption of alcohol.

> play around all week with any badger-trimmed hick that owns a ford, and fool me on Saturday, don't you? Don't think I didn't see your name where it's written on that lavatory wall. Don't you believe me?" (37-38).

This vitriol precedes the car accident on the outskirts of the Old Frenchman Place where Stevens, remarkably, seeks *more* alcohol.

The specifics of Gowan's binge require a closer look. By the time he picks Temple up in Taylor, he has consumed no less than six drinks[9] since his initial encounter with the three townspeople the night before. When he awakens from last night's bender, his condition has hardly improved. Temple's adverse reaction upon seeing Gowan can be expected, as the baseball game in Starkville will presumably be a gathering of noted university students. Gowan's tirade, however, is unexpected and belies the persona he has projected up to this point. Although the narrative initially casts suspicion on Gowan, his sudden change in demeanor proves troubling. Gowan's personality change and his relentless pursuit of more liquor reveals what occurs when problem drinkers consume: they (re)act like the alcoholics they are.[10] In a novel saturated by Prohibition, Gowan's problem drinking signifies a disconnect between the South and the rest of the nation; the modernizing social economy arising from illegal liquor held no place for cavalier masculinity. This reorganization of staid social relations implies that the region's social mores—which remained fundamental to southern sociological relations—painted the South as resistant to modernity.

[9] I use the term "drink" loosely, since each cocktail he makes contains far more than a single shot. For example, "Gowan filled the glass level full and lifted it and emptied it steadily" (34).

[10] See, among others, John W. Crowley's *The White Logic* and Susan Zieger's *Inventing the Addict* for a fuller discussion of the shifting conceptual significance of "alcoholism" from the onset of the Temperance Movement through the mid-twentieth-century. The implications of Gowan's consumption can only extend to the etymological reaches of how "alcoholism" was understood in the national consciousness at this time. The prevailing concept of "alcoholic" or "problem drinker" in 1930 had yet to assume the medical and rhetorical significance that is possessed later. Benjamin Rush's monumental study *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind* (1823) is credited with introducing the disease model of alcoholism, though popular understanding of "disease" underwent myriad interpretive evolution when it was adopted by the Temperance Movement. Temperance advocates argued that alcoholism was a disease of the will, as opposed to the body, and, therefore, a moral problem (Crowley 4, 24). Not until the Alcoholism Movement from the late 1930s through the 1960s (coinciding with the emergence of A.A.) was the "disease" aspect of alcoholism addressed as a distinct medical problem (144).

Antiquated class and gender prescriptions were fading as modernity shifted long held socio-economic relations away from backward tradition and toward a social system predicated on the profitability of illegal bootlegging. For Faulkner's Jefferson, this transition proves troubling and foreboding of how mired in social-political regression the region actually is. If the South's drunken youth are not aware of the new reality born from Prohibition, then the future appears bleak for the entire region. Gowan occupies ambiguous ground in the novel as a young man imbibing during the reign of the Volstead Act; his drinking might register as symbolic protest against the hypocrisy of outlawed drinking were he not comically preoccupied with his guise as Virginia gentleman. His problem drinking further undercuts any protest and paints the South as a place where lawlessness and disorder proliferate while lawmakers and civic leaders turn a blind eye to the chaos they helped create.

In his social history of alcohol, *Drink*, Andrew Barr cites noted journalist A.J. Liebling:

> People whose youth did not coincide with the Twenties never had our reverence for strong drink … Older men knew liquor before it became the symbol of a sacred cause. Kids who began drinking after 1933 took it as a matter of course. For us it was a self-righteous pleasure.… [B]y drinking, we proved to ourselves our freedom as individuals and flouted Congress.… It was the only period when a fellow could be smug and slopped concurrently (237).

Chronologically speaking, Gowan's drinking should mirror Liebling's, yet his obsession with being the Virginia gentleman negates the symbolic power of social protest. If anything, Gowan's consumption supports the impetus behind Temperance reform that drinking in excess threatened family stability and, subsequently, the nation itself. The deviant significance of his drinking is compounded by his purported gentlemanliness, as his masculinity not only becomes subsumed by his drunkenness but comes to represent the very (perceived) threat to the bastion of southern social stability. Zieger traces this threat as it appeared in nineteenth-century temperance narratives: "Such stories made 'habitual drunkenness' and 'intemperance' bywords for the systematic depletion of

white, middle-class, masculine subjective dynamism; the 'slavery of drink' metaphor ironically recast white men as figuratively black, disempowered, static, and emasculated" (21). To update Zieger's point, *Sanctuary* can hardly be categorized as a temperance novel, though Gowan's inebriation functions similarly to, say, the drunken sots who populate T.S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*: the fallout from his binge emasculates him and, perhaps more disastrous to his social standing, figuratively blackens his character. But the severity of Gowan's consumption is not the only emasculating signifier[11] at work. In their southern manifesto, the Agrarians (notably John Crowe Ransom), argue that industrialization from the North (i.e., "progress") inverts gendered prescriptions of regional production: "production is a masculine force and consumption is an emasculating one … Masculinity is no longer figured in terms of paternalistic white Southern gentleman," since that gentleman, according to Ransom, "has become impotent" (qtd in Guttman 21). The inebriated Gowan Stevens who berates Temple becomes figuratively "black," as Zieger argues, a vacuous symbol of white masculinity. His blackness becomes compounded, since it marks him as perpetual consumer rather than producer. Instead of protecting, he threatens, and his habitual drunkenness marks his nefarious consumption with disastrous social and personal consequences.

After the car overturns, Gowan's drinking reaches critical mass. His and Temple's social standing holds no value after they transition from the security of Jefferson's city limits to the shady outskirts of the Old Frenchman Place. Again, Gowan incorrectly assumes that the character of the Virginia gentleman possesses value when it clearly does not. If this façade appears silly to Horace and Miss Jenny in Jefferson, it becomes dangerous in this setting. Gowan's drinking binge escalates

[11] Sondra Guttman argues that *Sanctuary* speaks to the gender insecurities of white men at this time, seen most glaringly in Faulkner's oft-quoted Preface to the novel. The author's insecurity of becoming "soft" by pandering to the demands of the market economy through the popular reading public becomes assuaged in the re-inscribing of plantation economy race-gender norms. Popeye's rape of Temple simultaneously reaffirms the South's pervading fear of black men violating white women, while also linking this anxiety to economic change (15).

in magnitude, as he does not want to "hedge" around these men. In performing whiteness, he seeks validation from the men with whom he shares the bottle. The physical confrontation between Gowan and Van embodies the clash of old and new social guard and shows how profoundly antiquated the figure of the Virginia gentleman is among these folk:

> "Think talk bout my—" Gowan said. He moved, swayed against the chair. It fell over. Gowan blundered into the wall.
> "By God, I'll—" Van said.
> "—ginia gentleman; I don't give a"—Gowan said. Goodwin flung him aside with a backhanded blow of his arm, and grasped Van. Gowan fell against the wall (68).

Having failed in his performance, Gowan leaves Temple alone, unable to fend for herself as he lay unconscious. When he awakens the next morning, like the previous day, he is still inebriated. He tries to recall details from the night before:

> He only remembered that he had passed out some time early in the night, and he thought that he was still drunk. But when he reached the wrecked car and saw the path and followed it to the spring and drank of the cold water, he found that it was a drink he wanted, and he knelt there, bathing his face in the cold water and trying to examine his reflection in the broken surface, whispering Jesus Christ to himself in a kind of despair. He thought about returning to the house for a drink, then he thought of having to face Temple, the men; of Temple there among them.… I'll get cleaned up some, he said. And coming back with a car. I'll decide what to say to her on the way to town; thinking of Temple running among people who knew him, who might know him. I passed out twice, he said. *I passed out twice*. Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ he whispered, his body writhing inside his disreputable and bloody clothes in an agony of rage and shame (85).

Critic Louis Palmer sees Gowan's actions simply as a fight-or-flight response to a situation born from unnatural social class interaction: "Stevens seems to get off the easiest [in the novel] because he plays by the rules—he keeps the relations between the classes in the realm of the socially sanctioned, albeit illegal, commerce of bootlegging. He is motivated by pure fear, and abandons Drake with no second thought—an inverted white knight" (128). Fear alone, however, does not properly account for the complex host of circumstances that ultimately propel him away. Gowan's

response merits consideration regarding the nature and significance of his consumption. First, "that it was a drink he wanted," speaks to the depth of his problem drinking. Alcohol is neither antiquated stage prop of a cavalier masculinity, nor signifier of youthful rebellion. Gowan is an alcoholic whose physiological thirst for liquor hinders his ability to follow what should be a clear moral-ethical direction. Faulkner's use of the word "paroxysm" speaks to the recurring nature of Gowan's problem drinking, coloring it as pathological rather than circumstantial. Next, his response cracks the veneer of his persona, exposing a young man who can barely mask his social insecurities. His primary concern stems from the gossip "among people who knew him," if his performance as gentleman is not validated. Lori Rotskoff affirms this, noting that "Ironically, the alcoholic's attempt to 'drink like a man' ultimately exposed the original neurosis that prompted it. If they consumed to excess, booze exacerbated the gender insecurities men sought to overcome by drinking in the first place" (78). Finally, this episode further undercuts his masculinity, since his flight from the Old Frenchman Place seems spurred as much by physically confronting the men as it does facing Temple. Reduced to bloody clothes and desperation, his "disreputable" self becomes defined by this act, and, as Gowan sees flight as the only option, he abandons Temple. Gowan becomes the dangerous fusion of the alcoholic drinker and the "inverted white knight," a woozy, caricatured identity long ceasing to be a bastion of stability and chivalry in the South. In his final act of cowardice, Stevens embodies the world that the South seems incapable to confront as modernity looms. The (black) big-city bootlegger desecrates the southern Temple, while the self-defeated gentleman slinks away, never to be heard from again.

The most immediate consequence of Gowan's binge lies in Temple's abandonment, leaving her prey to the drunken men at the Old Frenchman Place. Gowan's alcoholic cowardice is exacerbated by the circumstance of Prohibition and represents the decaying vanguard of an

antiquated South that, the novel suggests, seems ill-equipped to confront the ambiguity of a modernizing South. The fallout from Gowan's problem drinking shows that the Virginia gentleman can no longer harmlessly imbibe, calling into question the legitimacy of white masculinity as the hegemonic preserver of southern culture. The critical significance of alcohol in *Sanctuary* does not end as Gowan exits in disgrace, however. In fact, Temple's quick devolution from relatively innocent college student to chain smoking nymphomaniac belies an even more dramatic example of how drinking signifies a seismic shift facing the South as it encountered changes to its socio-cultural standing. Just as young men consumed differently as a unified front protesting Prohibition, women did as well, and the perception of women drinkers underwent a startling transformation at this time.

Women drinkers in the years preceding the Eighteenth Amendment—particularly those of the middle- and upper-classes—resisted categorical definition, since they did not consume publicly. Female gender roles were decidedly Victorian at this time, as propriety reigned and excessive drinking held no place in the realm of middle- or upper-class domesticity. For the most part, Temple adheres to such gendered prescriptions regarding female drinkers. Daniel Okrent traces an emerging trend in how young men and women interacted when alcohol was involved during Prohibition, citing one police officer's recollection that, "'The girls simply won't go out with boys who haven't got flasks to offer'" (222). Temple's behavior aligns itself with this observation, as she frequently sneaks off campus to ride around with town boys. The social penalty for these transgressions have landed her on probation, though the true consequences Temple faces come from the men in her family, revealing the extent to which society disapproves of women in the presence of alcohol. She confesses to Ruby, "'Buddy—that's Hubert, my youngest brother—said that if he ever caught me with a drunk man, he'd beat hell out of me'" (Faulkner 55). Besides allusions to her flirtatiousness, the narrative gives little indication that she drinks substantially. Her first real encounter with alcohol

reveals the same strong repulsion to booze presumably shared by other upper-class women at this time. When she sees Gowan on the morning of the baseball game, her reaction is immediate: "'You're drunk,' she said. 'You pig. You filthy pig'" (36). Temple's preoccupation with Gowan's drinking continues into the night. "He's going to drink some more, she thought; he's getting drunk again. That makes three times today'" (51), suggesting that her discomfort in this setting stems from the audacity of Gowan's consumption as much as it does from fear for her personal safety.

Before she is kidnapped, Temple occupies a familiar gendered space for young women at the time. Andrew Barr notes that Prohibition's intent to stigmatize drinking actually caused "a lot of respectable women to take up drinking who had not done so before" (237). Even though we do not see Temple imbibe initially, her probation-worthy excursions with townies and the threat made by her brother suggest that, like the women Barr cites, she is a willing participant in Prohibition's new drinking culture. Her fear of consequence stemming from further liaisons with drinkers and her disgust at Gowan's inebriety, however, place her firmly within the realm of women non-drinkers. Her role in Jefferson's sociology of consumption remains peripheral, but her feminine purity disappears after her displacement to Memphis. By the time Benbow finds her, she has undergone a radical transformation. No longer the innocent college flapper unwillingly forced into Jefferson's violent underworld, the Temple Drake of Memphis consumes like the whores among whom she now lives, a complete inversion of southern female purity. Temple's drinking after the rape becomes nearly as severe as Gowan's, forcing a categorical (re)consideration of her status as a drinker. In addition, her descent into prostitution reveals how Prohibition further exposed the vulnerable state in which southern women of privilege existed, especially when forced to confront the frightening reality of the outside world. Temple's victimization is made all the more injurious to the southern

psyche in that her body, much like the illegal booze channeled underground, has become just another commodity in the bootlegging network of exchange.

Temple's fall seems to betray every marker of her class and gender privilege, since women of her social pedigree did not publicly consume before this time. What, then, accounts for her descent? The answer locates a curious paradox concerning women consumers at this time where female-driven temperance reform—meant to protect their own—inadvertently created a visible class of gendered drinkers. Women fought vigorously for national Prohibition, citing, among their many political reasons, the need to protect other women in the domestic sphere: "[Temperance reformers] wanted the right to divorce [drunken] men, and to have them arrested for wife beating, and to protect their children from being terrorized by them. To all these things they needed to change the laws that consigned married women to the status of the chattel. And to change the laws, they needed the vote" (Okrent 15). The impetus behind temperance reform was progressive through-and-through, and other such political agendas (particularly suffrage) attached themselves to the movement. The result of these measures was, of course, the passage of the Volstead Act, which bred unintended consequences pertaining to the fragile demographic Prohibition was meant to protect: women. The drinking youth who arose during Prohibition deviated from previous generations of public drinkers in its surprising inclusion of women. Okrent speaks to this change: "A pretty girl—truth be told, virtually any kind of girl—in a drinking establishment was one of the astonishments of Prohibition, a shock both severe and enduring" (211). Because the new drinkers at this time were women, the "progressive" tint of reform was called into question—how effective can the constitutional outlaw of alcohol be if it impels women to drink, especially in *public*? Such fallout posed significant threats to southern hegemony where female purity was held in the highest regard.

Temple's place in the continuum of women drinkers is complicated by two facts: the first is that consumption in Jefferson during Prohibition does not occur in speakeasies (such places are not to be found in the novel) where it could avail itself for scrutiny; second is her social-economic circumstance. Because she is the only daughter of Judge Drake (she has four older brothers), her symbolic location in the family pecking order requires that she uphold the family name in ways appropriate for a well-behaving daughter. Her fear that Buddy will "beat hell out of me" if she were found socializing with a drunk man speaks to the precariousness of her situation as an upper-class southern woman. The message: no drinking for Temple, since the potential social consequences reach beyond her own self and affect the rest of her family as well. Alcohol possesses an especially deviant significance for her, showing an entrenched gender dichotomy: Gowan Stevens requires alcohol as performative prop for his status as gentleman, while Temple's social value depends on temperance.

The drunk-temperate gender model, as Okrent states, began to break down during Prohibition, though much of the South's upper crust still clung tightly to gendered prescriptions of drinking. This makes Temple's devolution from temperate to drinker all the more important as a statement speaking to how the South confronted modernity. Before Prohibition produced the flapper, habitual female drinkers were broadly conceived as either masculine or promiscuous. Regarding the former category, women drinkers, like men, assumed masculine qualities when consuming, something Crowley notes of Lady Brett Ashley in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. In a novel filled with constant drinking, Brett holds her liquor as well as any of her male counterparts, meaning that she "might easily be (mis)taken as 'mannish,' especially when she is drinking" (57). Such a portrayal seems no accident on Hemingway's part—Brett's short-cropped hair marks her with an outward masculinity—as "The alcoholic for Hemingway is … unwomanly" (57). Temple

clearly cannot be categorized as such, though her identity transformation dovetails closely with the other category of women drinkers. The alternative to defining women drinkers as masculine was to define them as prostitutes, something noted by historian Michelle McClellan: "[T]he much more familiar stereotype about alcoholic women was that they were heterosexually promiscuous … In addition, the censure of alcoholic women's alleged homosexual promiscuity … conjured the familiar image of the drunken prostitute" (288). But for Temple to become the floozy prostitute she is, her symbolic status as feminized (dry) southern woman has to be compromised.

Temple's rape destroys the feminine purity that temperance reform and masculine (fraternal) overprotection sought to preserve. She has become the fallen version of her former self, desecrated sexually and by a "black" man, no less. Critics of the novel are correct in pointing to the brutal rape as one source for Temple's physical decline once she is transplanted to Memphis. When she recalls the night spent at the Old Frenchman Place, she explains to Benbow how "'I ought to be a man'" (Faulkner 220), indicating the degree to which she exists outside of herself as a means to cope with the physical and emotional brutality. In other words, her self-medicating with gin and cigarettes ought not to alarm, considering all that she has been through. However, much like in the case of Gowan Stevens and his dangerous binge, the frequency and severity of Temple's consumption alludes to something deeper, especially considering how loaded a cultural signifier that women drinkers were at this time.

The link between alcohol and sex must be emphasized here, as Temple's newfound drinking habits coincide with—indeed precipitate—her nymphomania. Recalling McClellan's aforementioned observation, Temple *is* very much the drunken prostitute defined by drink and sex. Popeye's surrogate phallus, Red, becomes Temple's sexual crutch, fueled in part by the gin she copiously consumes. One begets the other, though the narrative complicates this symbiosis in her seemingly

genuine feelings for Red. Temple's most sustained drinking binge occurs on the night Red is murdered. She begins drinking gin and smoking cigarettes, noting after a couple cocktails that "I'll need it later … I'll need more than that" (228). After Popeye intercepts her on the way to the club, the imbibing increases. Eventually, her intoxication confuses her spatial awareness:

> She believed that she had been drunk for some time. She thought that perhaps she had passed out and that it had already happened. She could hear herself saying I hope it has. I hope it has. Then she believed it had and she was overcome by a sense of bereavement and of *physical desire*. She thought, It will never be again, and she sat in a floating swoon of agonized sorrow and *erotic longing*, thinking of Red's body, watching her hand holding the empty bottle over the glass (237, emphases mine).

Finally, Popeye cuts her off: "'You've drunk it all'" (237). The relationship between sexual and alcoholic longings is important in examining Temple's situation, since it paints her as a specific type of drinker with profound impact on the novel's ethos as a "wasteland." First, her sexual desires, as well as her literal and figurative relocation to a brothel show Temple to be exactly as she appears, a nymphomaniac. The corncob claims more than her virginity, shattering the social class buffer that had separated her from the women with whom she now lives. Next, and perhaps more importantly, her drinking signifies how the novel addresses the South's conservative, anti-progressive ideology. If, historically, temperance reform represented a measure of progressive politics, the novel reveals that this progressivism is at best flawed, at worst an illusion, particularly as it shows Prohibition in all of its manifested corruption. Here, Faulkner strengthens his critique of southern social stagnation, and Temple's actions serve this criticism well. Temple's new promiscuity and excessive drinking offend all that she once represented as a southern woman of high standing. From the beginning of the novel, she tries to adhere to her type despite a rebellious streak that carves a less-than-stellar reputation among students and townsfolk alike. Like Gowan and his Virginia gentleman identity, Temple as the chaste, sober inheritor of antiquated southern tradition appears as nothing more than an anachronism encouraged by white men. The threat of violence stymies her potential during a time

of great social progress for women and other marginalized groups. However, as critic Leigh Anne Duck states, the South remained "incompatible with the progress still highly valued during this [modernizing] period of U.S. history" (76). Temple becoming an alcoholic prostitute, then, must not simply be understood as the re-categorizing of a woman drinker, but as an inevitable result of the South's refusal to embrace progress (*Lighten up on the cultural restrictions, or your women become this!*). Indeed, as Popeye embodies the threat[12] of modernization—the sleek, sterile, ruthless businessman—the South's inevitable encounter with him necessarily produces a "season of rain and death" (Faulkner 317).

If, as Pitavy suggests, *Sanctuary* is a novel about Prohibition, the historical setting merely begins to tell the story. The politics that preceded Prohibition sought to preserve a measure of family stability through the constitutional outlaw of alcohol. As straightforward as this legislation purported to be, it (in)directly produced disastrous consequences undercutting the social and domestic stability that temperance reform initially sought. Even more threatening, though, were the ways that Prohibition affected the manner in which persons—especially younger ones—consumed. Federally mandated sobriety at once galvanized a young, urban demographic that drank in solidarity and protest, impelling women to out their drinking selves in public for the first time. On the surface, the emergence of the flapper seems harmless enough, the progressive evolution of a long-marginalized sector of the population now finding a voice. Such progress was not as evident or accepted in Faulkner's South, however. Critics argue persuasively how the South remained stagnant in spite of the tide of social change elsewhere. Thus, in the cases of Gowan Stevens and Temple Drake—embodiments of southern youth at a time when young people spoke loudly for social and political

[12] Sondra Guttman concurs with Cleanth Brooks' sentiment that Popeye embodies evil in the novel. She argues that, as the sterile embodiment of northern industrialization, Popeye's blackness is not a racial marker but an economic one. Hence, his industrialized blackness contrasts southern whiteness, symbolic of an agrarian economy (25-26).

progress—drinking serves special significance in examining how Faulkner perhaps anticipated the South's place in a modernizing America. In Faulkner's Jefferson, drinking remains dubious at best, denied at worst, laying bare the hypocrisy of a region that unapologetically gained from illegal liquor while cleaving to the "progressive" nature of temperance.

Gowan and Temple's identities are inextricably tied to class and gender. Performing as the Virginia gentleman, Gowan falsely imagines his anachronistic self as having to drink to impress. The newly formed social economy surrounding illegal booze holds no place for him, and his problem drinking undercuts his purported masculine identity as "gentleman." In the end, Gowan serves as the ironic (sub)version of his performative self—the mythical cavalier gentleman inherits no social purchase in *this* South. As a southern woman from a prominent, male-dominated family, Temple is governed by the social codes mandated by the rest of society. Temple's ultimate moral betrayal—the perjury she commits that results in Goodwin's death—occurs against the backdrop of her social fall from grace. Temple's drinking marks her as the prostitute she has become, and her alcoholic promiscuity represents the most dangerous threat to feminine purity left unprotected. It is the method and enforcement of this protection, however, that the novel questions. Temple and Gowan's encounters with the Popeyes of the world are *inevitable*, as Jefferson's social mores are cracking and can sustain pressures from the outside no longer. On the surface, Jefferson seems opposed to alcohol, yet it reaps financial gain and class reinforcement from it. As an act in defiance of a law passed to progress the nation through mandated sobriety, drinking in the novel becomes symbolic of the South's ambiguous stance toward social change.

***Requiem for a Nun*'s Alcoholic Marriage**

The societal discord in *Sanctuary* stems from Jefferson's encountering the modernizing nation-state, as the social economy born out of Prohibition challenged many of the South's

cultural strongholds in matters pertaining to class and gender. Regardless of the progressive disparity between the South and the rest of the nation, the South was still part of the national fabric, a fact which casts its separate social and political ideology ironically. While the rest of the nation-state viewed the region as distinct, it eventually understood southern ideological stasis to be a threat to its own forward-looking program, magnifying the implications of how Temple and Gowan consume in light of progress elsewhere. The novel's dreary milieu intensifies when considering how Faulkner's critique uses Prohibition to target a stagnant region that devoted itself to a cultural tradition that marginalized others under the guise of purportedly high moral standing. The historical circumstances informing *Requiem for a Nun* are hardly as dramatic as those in *Sanctuary*, though these contextual subtleties bear profoundly on the continued story of Mr. and Mrs. Gowan Stevens and how it is to be understood in relation to drinking and social progress in the modernizing South.

To understand the cultural resonance of alcohol and drinking in *Requiem for a Nun*, the historical context requires some unpacking, particularly in how the South responded to the inevitable din of social progress at midcentury. Leigh Anne Duck argues that Cold War politics discouraged criticism of (southern) race relations: "[B]y the late 1940s, activists suggesting that U.S. apartheid reflected broad and intractable problems with the nation-state and its purportedly liberal structures were pronounced subversive and subjected to harassment and substantial penalties" (214). Noteworthy in the muting of such progressive discourse was the way in which southern political backwardness was becoming essentialized as "culture," effectively excusing the region's regressive stance as something beyond political fixing (216). Despite Duck's assessment that the Cold War re-instantiated stasis in the South, the nation-state as a whole saw unprecedented economic growth. This growth projected the appearance of a nation on the cusp

of full-scale modernization in economic matters, despite the obvious contradiction in domestic social relations.

In Duck's reading of *Requiem for a Nun*, she persuasively describes the prose chapters as examples of how Faulkner characterizes American social-political ideology as something akin to Cold War discourse that "fuels profoundly destructive forms of racial stereotyping and demarcation" (222). The strands of Cold War ideology pulled opposite one another—as America pursued economic growth in the modern market, progress in race relations suffered disproportionately—creating a tension where progress remained elusive. *Requiem* attempts (in the end, unsuccessfully) to reconcile the forward momentum of the nation with the backward cultural pull from the South. Faulkner's ambivalence concerning the potential fallout from unbridled capitalism notwithstanding, the novel, according to Duck, ascribes a certain view of chronological time that runs counter to the rest of the progressing nation: "*Requiem* suggests that contemporary attachment to the southern past constitutes absolute rejection of the nation's linear time" (224). Thus the novel tries to have it both ways, acknowledging contemporary social inequalities, while continually looking backward. *Requiem*'s presentation of social progress must be read with suspicion, though the representation of alcohol and drinking in examining the novel resists such a straightforward conclusion. Duck's assessment of how the prose sections reflect the contradictions in national versus regional time parallels how the novel's dramatic actors reconcile their guilty pasts with their miserable presents, unable to move forward into the productive modern economy. The novel's conclusion upholds its ambivalence regarding genuine social progress. Through the lenses of alcoholism and recovery, however, *Requiem* both affirms and challenges the notion that the South, like Temple, is "Doomed. Damned" (Faulkner 245). Although such a reading hardly suffices as "progress," it nonetheless acknowledges the central

role that alcohol plays when examining how, if at all, Temple and Gowan are indeed "recovered."

In *Love on the Rocks*, Lori Rotskoff cites a 1949 statement by noted journalist Herbert Bloch:

> No longer does John Barleycorn constitute a moral problem, a reprehensible degenerate and an object of scorn or pity to the good ladies of the Temperance Union. *Instead he is now a sick man*. The celebrated target of the pulpits now becomes a matter of scientific concern and analytical vivisection to the psychiatrist, the sociologist, the physiologist and the medical profession. He now enjoys moral impunity, but no longer scientific disinterest and detachment…. His metamorphosis has been similar to the belated respectability accorded other social problems and diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhea, which, lifted from the previous perspective of moral opprobrium, now fall within the province of a scientifically enlightened interest (64).

Indeed, a seismic paradigm shift was occurring by the end of Prohibition, one that forever changed how alcohol and drinking were perceived in the national consciousness. The Great Depression and World War II (among other factors) facilitated this post-Repeal sentiment, as scientists of all fields "quite deliberately sought ways to depoliticize the alcohol problem, thus wresting it from the country's dry-wet tug of war" (Roizen 63-64). Gone, too, was the notion that drinking symbolized an act of defiance. The political fallout from Prohibition exhausted a nation with more pressing concerns to address, and the strict moral terms of the wet-dry political debate were challenged. As stated in the introduction, what emerged from the political rubble was the outgrowth that became known as the Sobriety Movement, typified in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935.

Faulkner, like any culturally aware person at the time, could not have been oblivious to the shifting perceptions of alcohol and drinking. As previously mentioned, his drinking precipitated a decline in health that negatively affected nearly every relationship he held dear. Blotner suggests that Faulkner's consumption came to characterize the writer as much as

anything, particularly as a husband and father later in his life when alcohol became increasingly problematic. Noteworthy to the subject of Faulkner's drinking is how it related to Estelle Faulkner's struggles with alcohol. Although his benders have become almost mythical in character, Estelle's were no less troubling to the stability of their marriage and the family as a whole. Early in their marriage, drinking exacerbated the couple's problems: "If his drinking made him a sometimes impossible husband, her drinking made her a sometimes unattractive wife" (360). As the marriage wore on, the drinking became an ever-worsening problem for both husband and wife. By 1953, Faulkner was officially diagnosed "an acute and chronic alcoholic," who "could no longer taper off on beer and will power" (574). By 1955, the deep unhappiness in their marriage only encouraged heavier consumption, as "[Bill] and Estelle were both drinking heavily" (591). The marital dynamic soon changed in the summer of 1955, however, when Estelle joined Alcoholics Anonymous (612). Her sobriety ushered in not only an acceptance of her alcoholism but the reality of a failing marriage: "Estelle had come to accept her situation with its aloneness, just as she had finally accepted her alcoholism" (627). Despite his wife's committed sobriety, Faulkner continued to drink for the rest of his life.

What is important to note in the Faulkners' alcoholisms is how one's consumption encouraged the other; one's misery with the other was assuaged with the bottle, magnifying the marital distress. The effects were cyclical and symbiotic. These biographical references illustrate a transition in the perception and treatment of alcoholism in the middle of the twentieth-century that perhaps affected Faulkner directly. With the damaging effects of alcoholism (and their subsequent treatment) having become so personal, Faulkner could be excused for an unusual preoccupation with drinking in his work at this time. Such preoccupation is evident in *Sanctuary*'s sequel, *Requiem for a Nun*. Like its predecessor, the dramatic action in *Requiem for*

a Nun is soaked in alcohol. There is, however, one major exception this time around: neither Temple nor Gowan ingest a single drop. Although alcohol and drinking are spoken of constantly, they are conceived of in explicitly pathologized terms indicative of the Sobriety Movement. Faulkner's resurrection of Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens as the main characters proves no accident and suggests that his literary treatment of drinking requires a second look, one focusing on how the *disease* of alcoholism threatens domesticity and, subsequently, social-economic standing in Jefferson's post-war middle-class. The discourse that characterizes drinking (or the lack thereof) in the dramatic scenes aligns the South with the rest of the nation (recasting it as not specifically regional), which slightly alters Duck's reading that the novel shows the continued southern backwardness in response to social progress. Temple and Gowan are mired in a post-war[13] malaise that exists simultaneously inside and outside of the South. As problem drinkers constantly struggling with the demons of their pasts, their domestic situation is not confined to region, and reflects an emerging national preoccupation with alcoholism. As parents coming to terms with their role in the murder of their daughter by their African-American nurse, however, their situation remains specifically southern[14] in how Nancy is regarded both as "nigger whore" and benevolent martyr.

[13] Faulkner's use of terminology germane to the Recovery Movement situates the novel beyond its intended chronological setting. I frequently refer to *Requiem*'s "post-war" milieu, which, I suggest, greatly informs its hermeneutical effect. Faulkner's chooses to set the novel "between the two great wars," though this clearly does not exempt him incorporating societal characteristics that post-date this period. I address the chronological disparity later in my analysis.

[14] In his work *Plantation Airs*, Brannon Costello argues that white southerners—the wealthy and the upwardly mobile—relied on the "performance of attitudes and behaviors—including, most significantly, racial paternalism—associated with an idealized version of agrarian antebellum aristocracy … to validate their identities as 'aristocrats' and [to] separate themselves from 'trash'" (1-2). Important here is the way in which Gowan Stevens—one of Costello's "upwardly mobile"—used the performance of Virginia Gentleman in *Sanctuary* to project a measure of aristocracy; in *Requiem for a Nun*, however, the aristocratic airs have evolved to incorporate the notion that the class mobility assume a level of philanthropy/charity toward marginalized African Americans. Thus, Gowan's repeated references to Nancy Mannigoe as "nigger whore" assume new relevance: the Stevenses' employing her becomes nothing more than racial paternalism meant to prop them up as ascending the social class ranks. I touch on this later in my analysis of Temple.

The eight years of narrative time that have elapsed between *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* do not accurately reflect the twenty years between their publications. Though they vary substantially in both form and quality, the two form a diptych insofar as Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens recur and their present situations logically follow from their actions from *Sanctuary*. Temple and Gowan are now an unhappily married couple living in the modern, country club niche of Jefferson's middle-class. The novel's temporal action centers on the murder of the Stevenses' second child, an unnamed infant daughter, by their black servant, a former prostitute and dope fiend, Nancy Mannigoe. Containing one of Faulkner's oft-quoted lines, "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (80), the novel centers on Temple's—and to a lesser degree Gowan's—confrontation with the immoral transgressions of the past. While Temple pleads to the Governor for Nancy's pardon at the eleventh hour, she is encouraged by Gavin Stevens (Nancy's benevolent defense attorney and Gowan's uncle) to confess how her past actions have made her indirectly complicit in the crime. In the end, Nancy cannot be saved, though the symbolism in martyring herself and the child provides Temple with a small measure of closure. What becomes inescapable by the novel's end, however, is what "We all are…. [d]oomed…[and] [d]amned" (245).

According to Noel Polk, *Requiem's* conclusion is "perhaps the darkest and least hopeful of all of Faulkner's work," (xiii) offering little hint of redemption for Temple and Gowan, let alone the South still grappling with its place in the modernizing nation. One issue becomes how to account for the novel's serious preoccupation with drinking, especially as husband and wife struggle to remain sober. Faulkner conceives of their relationship in "drinking" terms, specifically those associated with the language of recovery from alcoholism. Longstanding societal pressures remain as they relate to class and gender, though the social-cultural milieu

informing this novel reflects a post-war South that, again, finds itself struggling with issues of social progress. Why the language of recovery? More precisely, recovery from what? Temple's and Gowan's inability to reconcile their present selves with their shameful pasts leads to marital purgatory where no amount of atonement provides closure for their actions in *Sanctuary*. What would theoretically help them—what they crave—is alcohol. Susan Zieger explains how guilt encouraged drinking among (white) alcoholics, as persons like Gowan and Temple come to represent "a mid-twentieth century U.S. literary … tradition of depicting white alcoholism and addiction as forms of melancholy self-medication to assuage guilt for past transgressions touching the core of elite white southern identity" (101). The cruel irony here is that, being the alcoholics they clearly are, Temple and Gowan simply cannot turn to the bottle for relief. Thus, their "recovered" drinking selves remain unable to be "cured" of their role in the fallout presented in this novel. Just as no measure of pleading to the Governor will pardon Nancy, Faulkner's use of recovery language merely proves ironic. As southerners confronting social change and who are characterized as recovering alcoholics, they are incurable.

The Stevenses' living situation as husband and wife represents a significant departure from the idealized southern setting that the "Virginia gentleman" would have imagined eight years prior. Their living room is "smart, modern, up-to-date," the ideal furnishings for "young couples … who can afford to pay that much rent in order to live on the right street [and] belong to the right church and the country club" (Faulkner 46). For his part, Gowan "is almost a type; there were many of him in America, the South, between the two great wars: only children of financially secure parents … alumni of the best colleges, South and East, where they belonged to the right clubs; married now and raising families yet still alumni of their schools, performing acceptably jobs they themselves did not ask for" (46-47). The stage notes suggest that he bears

the weight of sins committed in the past, "trying, really and sincerely and selflessly (perhaps for the first time in [his] life) to do [his] best with according to [his] code" (47). What seems remarkable about this setting is how *un*remarkable it is, a fact that Faulkner emphasizes repeatedly in through mundane description. Specifically, Faulkner cites Gowan as being "a type," anonymous among the scores who have yet to distinguish themselves in business apart from what they inherited. The "modernised" world of the novel establishes itself as a South transformed; Faulkner's description seemingly belies the southern setting altogether, and Gowan's socio-economic position becomes indistinguishable from any other aspiring "smart, modern, up-to-date" man ascending the corporate ladders of post-war capitalism. Gone are any sentimentalized markers of Jefferson during Prohibition where, despite pervasive corruption, appearances of societal stasis remained intact. The Jefferson of this novel seems fully embroiled in the capitalist end game where one's ancestry bears little on "success" on the here and now.

What remains in spite of the capitalist sea change is Gowan's need to establish his role as head of the household. In Act One, scene II, Temple, Gowan, and Gavin convene in the Stevenses' living room after hearing the guilty verdict. Playing host, Gowan volunteers to fix drinks, noting that "I'm going to have one myself. For a change. After eight years. Why not?" (51). The weight of this admission is substantial: Gowan's shame in *passing out* the night before he abandons Temple in *Sanctuary* has, it seems, shamed him into sobriety. In this regard, Gowan Stevens eight years later appears a stark contrast to his former, drunken self. He continues, "Nary a drink in eight years; count 'em. So maybe this will be a good time to start again. At least it won't be too soon" (51). Almost as soon as he boasts the end to his self-mandated sobriety, he does something curious: "As though not aware that he had done so, he sets his untasted glass back on the tray, splashes water from the pitcher into a tumbler and hands the tumbler to [Gavin]

Stevens.… Temple has not touched hers either" (51). Something is amiss; the deliberate nature of these early stage directions portrays Gowan as a changed man. These, changes, however, possess profound implications regarding his domestic role in the family and his ability to transcend his monotonous class lot in modern society, particularly as they relate to (not) drinking.

After Repeal, America underwent a profound transition in how it perceived of alcohol and drinking, most notably in how problem drinkers were treated. Sociologist Ron Roizen addresses one aspect of this transition:

> Alcohol, in the early post-Repeal era, was widely touted as a benign commodity, both in the popular and research literatures. The alcoholism paradigm lent support to this moral coloration for alcohol by emphasizing that only the unfortunate few (i.e., the alcoholics) would get into trouble because of their drinking. These few, however, could lodge credible demands for benevolent handling (i.e., treatment) from society, given that the prevailing cultural definition of alcohol (i.e., as benign) had invited and justified their drinking in the first place (77).

Roizen's statement speaks to the double-edged consequence of drinking. As Gowan and others of his generation initially justified drinking for various reasons, much of the nation perceived of alcohol as something harmless. It was precisely this easy entrée into the culture of drink, however, that led problem drinkers, "the unfortunate few," to alcoholism. Roizen's assertion that these alcoholics "could lodge credible demands for [treatment] from society" meets resistance in the figure of Gowan, since drinking—despite acknowledgement from the scientific community regarding the dangers of alcoholism as a disease—still signified something inherently "masculine" and, thus, culturally relevant in its consumption, particularly in the South. Herein lies the irony in Gowan's situation: based on the severity of his alcoholism, sobriety becomes essential to his physiological survival and necessary for any hope of domestic stability. This sobriety, however, comes at a price, since consumption remained a marker of success to the

modern man of business. Regardless of society's complicity in producing alcoholics (according to Roizen), a sober Gowan necessarily becomes emasculated and, therefore, less qualified to participate meaningfully in the modern social economy.

The dramatic action in Act One, scene II frames *Requiem*'s entire ethos in the post-war culture of the Sobriety Movement, and it is through the use of recovery language that Faulkner characterizes Gowan's temporal situation as a man struggling with the social and professional consequences of sobriety during a profound social and economic shift. The scene is fraught with references to alcohol, most notably Gowan and Temple's temptation and seeming inability to drink. What becomes immediately noticeable in the exchange between Gowan and Gavin (whom I will refer to as the text does, "Stevens"), is Gowan's tug-of-war between temptation and self-denial. His push and pull evokes the image of a man reformed, though still seduced by the idea of a cocktail to take the edge off. After Temple exits, Gowan and Stevens speak:

> Gowan: Drink up. After all, I've got to eat supper and do some packing too. How about it?
> Stevens: About what? The packing, or the drink? What about you? I thought you were going to have one.
> Gowan: Oh, sure, sure … Maybe you had better go on and leave us to our revenge.
> Stevens: I wish it could comfort you.
>
> Gowan: I wish to God it could. I wish to God that what I wanted was only revenge… (Faulkner 59).

What is left unsaid in this exchange comprises the gravity of the situation. Gowan gives no indication that he seriously considers consuming the drink, as his "Oh, sure, sure" comment implies. However, his suggestion that Stevens "leave us to our revenge" casts the significance of Gowan's potential imbibing in a darker light, marking the cocktail as another, more nefarious actor in the drama. Stevens's wish that "it" could comfort his nephew is freighted with the idea that Gowan's alcoholism makes such revenge impossible, since his sobriety precludes the

possibility that "it" effectively salves his emotional wounds. Though he resists the temptation, Gowan nevertheless acknowledges the physiological pull toward the bottle, going so far as equating his want for revenge with his desire for a sip. What follows this exchange is one source of Gowan's angst: other than the obvious grief he feels for his murdered daughter, he has never fully forgiven Temple for her transgressions in *Sanctuary*, a fact that deepens his despair since their marriage is atonement for his actions in the first novel.

Gowan's inability to drink only magnifies his insecurities as a southern white man during a time of crisis and uncertainty. Unable to succumb to his desire for a self-medicating drink, Gowan finally "dashes the whiskey, glass and all, into the ice bowl, quickly catches up one of the empty tumblers in one hand and, at the same time, tilts the whiskey bottle over it, pouring" (60). His frustration extends beyond his not drinking, touching on the emptied power of his white masculinity as a result of this sobriety and Temple's reputation. Given the economic shift toward post-war modern capitalism, Gowan's domestic masculinity assumes the greatest value insofar as it resonates outside of the domestic sphere. Consider how Rotskoff articulates the relationship between material success and alcohol:

> Domestic ideology dovetailed with consumer capitalism to perpetuate the ideals of the independent male breadwinner and the subordinate female caretaker.… For both temperance advocates in the 1910s and therapeutic experts in the 1950s, a husband's alcohol consumption could signify the family's ability—or conversely, its inability—to partake of national plenty, to thrive during hard times, and to convert men's income into sustenance for women and children (15).

The alcohol consumption Rotskoff references acts with doubled significance in the novel. Just as one's (problem) drinking was once equated with masculine virility, in these therapeutic times it is seen as a hindrance from prosperity. The convergence of true historical moment (post-war, 1950s) and setting (late 1930s), however, complicates the portrayal of Gowan's white masculinity as a reformed drinker.

As eight years have passed since *Sanctuary*, *Requiem* takes place sometime in the late 1930s, a time when "Americans were quick to embrace reassuring images that buttressed men's self-identity *as* men. Therefore, they may have been less likely to support an ideology that dismissed drinking, a conventional sign of masculine prerogative" (Rotskoff 46). Given the history recalled in the novel, Gowan's sobriety emasculates him, fueling this bizarre ritual of preparing a drink before pouring it out. The novel's publication date (1951), however, cannot be ignored when examining Gowan's compromised masculinity, especially since the relationship between drinking and gender underwent considerable conceptual revision after the Great Depression. By the 1940s, masculine virility had been emptied of some of its significance among men who drank heavily, as the disease paradigm of alcoholism became widely accepted (79). Given Estelle Faulkner's diagnosed alcoholism and the increasing ubiquity of A.A. and the Sobriety Movement, Faulkner most likely understood this changing perception of male drinkers, giving more depth to the complexities inherent in Gowan's position as a recovered drinker at this time.

Where does this leave Gowan? His aversion to actual consumption consistently trumps his craving, suggesting that he has presently mastered the physiological hold of alcohol. His sobriety still complicates his participation in the modern economy, however. Andrew Barr states that "the martini suited the demands of those people who climbed into the upper-classes in the 1940s and 1950s. The man who had 'arrived' needed a drink that was appropriate to his new position, and found it in the new martini" (49-50). Thus, professional ascent became tied symbolically to the strength of the drink signifying this success. If, as Rotskoff noted earlier, breadwinning was equated to domestic happiness, then alcohol must enter the fray at some point. This assumes, however, that Gowan's greatest frustrations are caused by failures in the

workplace, and, though the narrative hardly trumpets his professional successes, it suggests that his greatest shortcomings are tied to his domestic situation. In what amounts to an A.A.-style admittance of a drinking problem incorporating the most overtly conceived "recovery" language, Gowan's anxiety crystallizes:

> Eight years. Eight years on the wagon—and this is what I got for it: my child murdered by a dope-fiend nigger whore that wouldn't even run so that a cop or somebody could have shot her down like the mad-dog—You see? Eight years without the drink, and so I got whatever it was I was buying by not drinking, and now I've got whatever it was I was paying for and it's paid for and so I can drink again. And now I dont want the drink. You see? Like whatever it was I was buying I not only didn't want, but what I was paying it wasn't worth anything, wasn't even any loss. So I have a laugh coming. That's triumph. Because I got a cut rate. I had two children. I had to pay only one of them to find out it wasn't really costing me anything—Half price: a child, and a dope-fiend nigger whore on a public gallows: that's all I had to pay for immunity (Faulkner 61).

Gowan repents for his part in Temple's victimization through sobriety, a figurative cost meant to "buy" forgiveness. This investment in sobriety pays no dividends, however. Not only does Gowan give up a vice he enjoys and that would boost his status in the modern workplace but his penance actually begets more grief and suffering. Now that he feels his sacrifice should be recognized, he cannot bring himself to drink. This aversion to drink either emasculates him further (a nod to Depression-era precepts of masculinity) or allows him to transcend his predicament as a man definitively on the wagon, fully recovered. A "recovered" Gowan, however, remains suspended in the ambiguity of the midcentury drinking culture where sobriety—despite legitimate, A.A.-modeled treatment gaining societal foothold—restricts access in the professional sphere. Regardless, there is still the source of his social purgatory to consider, the person whose actions seemingly prevent him from forgiving himself: Temple.

For Gowan's literal and figurative recoveries to be accepted, he must acknowledge how he endangered Temple eight years prior. Speaking in the third-person, Gowan recalls his

exploits. He was "trained at Virginia to drink like a gentleman, [then] gets drunk as ten gentlemen, takes a country college girl … cross country … gets drunker than twenty gentlemen, gets lost, gets still drunker than forty gentlemen, wrecks the car, passes eighty gentlemen now…" (62). In reconstructing these events, Gowan implicates the "Virginia gentleman," assigning personal culpability to the identity he once thought so important. As the severity of his transgressions increase, so too do the number of gentlemen complicit in them until, finally, he commits the gravest crime of all, admitting that "Marrying her was purest Old Virginia. That was indeed the hundred and sixty gentlemen" (63). If the correlation between number of gentlemen and severity of the act ends with his "purest Old Virginia" chivalry, then the implication is that his obligatory marriage to Temple was as ill-fated as his drunken escapade. Why? The irony in Gowan's atoning sobriety is that Temple "loved it" and took pleasure in the sexual climate in Memphis. Stevens concludes that Gowan's unsympathetic stance toward Nancy is fueled by his inability to forgive Temple for this. Temple hardly suffered then, but Gowan continues to do so eight years later, a fact, Stevens concludes, his nephew resents: "That you had to lose not only your bachelor freedom, but your man's self-respect in the chastity of his wife and your child too, to pay for something your wife hadn't even lost, didn't even miss?" (64). Stevens's moral indictment of his nephew aggravates the wound to Gowan's masculine psyche. Gowan felt impelled to compensate for Temple's victimization using the socially antiquated means of "Old Virginia." The problem, he comes to realize, was that *this* time and place is not Old Virginia and Temple's sexual deviance is not something that ill-informed chivalry can undo. The price Gowan pays for his mistake in judgment is life without drink for a woman seemingly without sexual scruples. Emasculated as a clinically sober man in the professional world, Gowan "needed to succeed in the workplace, but the fruits of his labors were best enjoyed at home. Domesticated

manhood and breadwinning were two sides of the same coin" (Rotskoff 32). Married to an unfaithful wife and grieving for a dead child, these domestic fruits prove rotten. As the stage darkens, Gowan appears as a man failing in both realms, pleading to no one in particular, "So help me, Christ … So help me Christ" (65). His cries parallel how "doomed" his situation appears to be, and the "help" he needs speaks to the precarious state of his sobriety; unfulfilled by Nancy's verdict and unable to drink, Gowan is left to appeal to a higher power, perhaps the same one partially responsible for his sobriety. The scene concludes with his breaking the empty whiskey glass against the fireplace.

Where the novel evokes the Recovery Movement through the language of sobriety, it also reflects the nation's shifting perception of women drinkers by the mid twentieth-century. After Repeal, drinking became dissociated from the idea of social disintegration, instead cleaving to a midcentury ethos incorporating psychiatry into the Recovery Movement (McClellan 286). This emergent presence of psychiatry strongly influenced the culture of sobriety, particularly as it related to women drinkers. Long ignored (or unseen) as categorical drinkers, middle-class female consumers did not fall so easily into the homosexual-promiscuous binary after Repeal. The link between sexuality and drinking still resonated, though, and the culture of psychiatry often ascribed past sexual encounters as having led to alcoholism in women. With women drinkers being an acknowledged category, they now assumed a notorious place in the realm of middle-class domesticity, one formerly occupied by men. The impetus driving temperance reform was the inebriated, bleary-eyed husband's threat to the defenseless household. Now that Gowan—the "breadwinner"—is a sober man, the location of the domestic drunken threat shifts to Temple. The culture of sobriety informing Faulkner's portrayal of drinking couched larger social anxieties associated with modernity and social progress in the figure of the woman drinker.

Collapsing categories of race and class, the woman alcoholic became a singular entity, "itself read as a sign of social disintegration" (McClellan 269). But such social disintegration corrupted from within the domestic sphere as much as it did out in public where women had greater access to professional opportunity. The increase in women's professional opportunities begat the same sort of problem drinking that once plagued men and abject women only, suggesting that "women's alcohol use was symptomatic of … unwelcome social changes" (275). In this sense, their consumption signified the negative side of social change, since such progress necessarily compromised traditional female gender roles related to domesticity. Progress for women was double-edged in that it provided opportunity, but not without temptation from the bottle for these closet-ousted drinkers. The threat alcohol posed to the family transposed itself onto Mom, since Dad was participating meaningfully in the capitalist economy (of which drinking was still an integral part) dominated by other men. Implicit here is the fact that women alcoholics were actually thought to be *more* diseased: "Even as [many psychiatrists of the 1940s] maintained that alcoholism was less common among women than among men because of regulatory gender norms, many doctors concluded that those women who did become alcoholic were therefore, by definition, sicker than their male counterparts" (277). This discrepancy has profound consequences for Temple in *Requiem*, as the "sickness" associated with alcoholism assumes a specifically female form and ushers in deeper, more permanent fallout to the stability of the family and, it is implied, the modernizing South.

When last we saw Temple in *Sanctuary*, she commits perjury to preserve her family's name, effectively sentencing Lee Goodwin to death. Temple Drake—now ostensibly redeemed as "Mrs. Gowan Stevens"—at the beginning of *Requiem* seems no better off because of her actions. Mourning the death of her daughter and racked with guilt over her past, she seeks solace

in the bottle, though, like her husband, she cannot bring herself to drink. The narrative does not allude to her drinking as being problematic, however, making her consumption seem an actual part of her everyday life. When Temple, Gowan, and Gavin enter in Act One, scene II, she immediately orders Gowan: "Will you for God's sake please get me a drink?" (48). Gowan obliges, though she seems uninterested in actually drinking the cocktail. After setting her glass down, Temple instructs Gowan, "And put ice in it this time, and maybe even a little water" (52). Oddly, she never touches it, reneging: "I don't want it. I want some milk" (54). Temple comes no closer to sipping the drink than Gowan. While the dialogue and stage notes share the same detailed preoccupation to the ritual of drinking, Temple's description elides the recovery jargon that characterizes her husband.

Even if Temple is not seen drinking here, the narrative suggests that she does occasionally. Or does it? As mentioned earlier, both Temple and Gowan are characterized as problem drinkers in *Sanctuary*, and the perception of their behavior is colored by class and gender norms present before and during Prohibition. In the eight years that have elapsed, Gowan's alcoholism has become a disease that complicates his masculinity in the modern social economy. For Temple's problem drinking to assume the same gravity, it does not have to be understood in the same terms, however. As McClellan and others state, women alcoholics were a recognized cultural reality at this time. Despite increasing opportunities in the workforce, their location in the modernizing world remained in the household, so their drinking signified more of a threat to domesticity rather than professional prosperity. While Faulkner's portrayal of Temple certainly alludes to this threat (she interacts with criminals, commits adultery, et cetera), the inattention paid to her supposedly alcoholic drinking proves troubling. If Temple cannot bring herself to drink, then why is she not characterized as "recovered" like her husband? More

importantly, does the narrative suggest fundamental limitations to her recovery since she is a woman drinker? What are the implications?

Gowan and Temple's marital union must be understood as a contributing factor in both of their alcoholisms. As psychiatrists sought to define/diagnose the physiological dynamics of alcoholism, they conceived of the entire domestic situation—specifically the roles played by (alcoholic) husband and (sober) wife—as contributing to the diseased family. As early conceptions of alcoholics centered on men, wives became necessary figures in the treatment of their husbands. Such women became known as *alcoholic's wives* (Rotskoff 150). By the middle of the century, psychiatrists and non-medical caseworkers alike agreed on the concept of the alcoholic marriage, where the alcoholic husband's disease becomes complemented—encouraged even—by his supposedly supportive wife. One famous caseworker, Thelma Whalen, went so far as to identify four "types"[15] of alcoholic wives, each of whom transposed her own gendered insecurities onto her drunken husband. Each type relied on her husband's alcoholism for validation of her gendered role within the household (154-155). The alcoholic marriage implicated husband and wife in the symbiosis of disease: "In the context of gender prescriptions for manly men and womanly women, experts viewed alcoholic husbands as failed men and their wives as deficient women.… [and] their drama of alcoholism played out when women, as well as men, failed to follow the proper psychological script" (156). Temple's notorious past implies that her present misery can be traced to Gowan's previous actions and vice versa. Gowan's

[15] Suffering Susan, Controlling Catherine, Wavering Winnifred, and Punitive Polly each "chose" their alcoholic spouses in order to meet distinct psychological needs (Rotskoff 154). Susan and Winnifred played more passive roles in the marriage, where Catherine and Polly asserted their domestic authority more overtly. Temple eschews easy categorization under any of the four, perhaps due to her own struggles with alcohol and sex, and because Gowan seems to have controlled his alcoholism. Had she read *Requiem for a Nun*, perhaps Whalen might have identified a fifth member of this notorious sorority: Tempted Temple. Susan, though, might come closest to Temple in her role in the alcoholic marriage: Susan's "dominant characteristic was the need to punish herself" so she selected a husband whose own emotional baggage satisfied her own need to be miserable (154).

commitment to sobriety and his precarious place as a sober man in the modernizing social economy mean that Temple plays an integral role in his continued failure or possible success. If the medical-historical understanding of the alcoholic marriage is true, however, then Temple's symbolic location as supportive wife requires further examination, especially since her own past is not a sober one.

The noticeable place that the untasted cocktail occupies in Act One, scene II implicates both Temple and Gowan as problem drinkers, at once affirming and complicating the notion that alcoholism in the early to mid-twentieth-century was a family problem. The Stevenses' situation remains fundamentally different from much of the A.A. and Al-Anon[16] discourse emphasizing the subordinate and dutiful wife. Examining the historical construction of the alcoholic marriage, Rotskoff argues that the success or failure of such a union depended on traditional gender roles in the domestic sphere. She states, "If men were to recover from alcoholism, they would need to reclaim their masculine authority and resume their roles as breadwinners and household heads. But so, too, were women exhorted to resume their feminine roles" (159). Traditional gender roles were not simply recalibrated so that men assumed dominant status; they also served to distinguish healthy families from diseased ones: "For many postwar experts a husband's chronic drunkenness was viewed as evidence of a diseased or dysfunctional family in which both spouses deviated from prevailing sex roles" (159). Recall how Temple's descent into prostitution reconfigures her femininity, effectively categorizing her into one of the only two available gender roles available to the woman drinker at that time. Her contribution to this dysfunctional

[16] These makeshift congregations of alcoholic wives—at first led by A.A. co-founder Dr. Bob Smith's wife Anne, then Bill Wilson's wife Lois—met in support of one another, eventually becoming Al-Anon. Rotskoff notes that the role of these alcoholic wives "suggests the paradox that AA's fraternal brotherhood itself depended on the emotional labor of women, in ways that were sometimes hidden and sometimes overt" (162). The gender split along A.A./Al-Anon lines shows, again, the gendered specificity that alcoholic drinking possessed, even at mid-century.

family stems from a troubled past that continuously complicates her gender role as supportive wife to her alcoholic husband.

After Gowan breaks his whiskey glass against the fireplace, the narrative shifts to the conversation between Temple and Stevens. With the exception of the milk-for-whiskey moment in scene II, Temple's anxiety about drinking is muted compared to Gowan's. The lack of recovery language ("sober," "wagon," et cetera) associated with Temple and the abundance of it with Gowan necessitates a reconfiguration of how we are to conceptualize her (problem) drinking. Can it even be called problem drinking? Regardless of how we last saw her in *Sanctuary*, her portrayal here does little to suggest that she is an alcoholic to the same degree as her husband, especially since (middle-class) women alcoholics were a category at this time (apart from Prohibition-era women drinkers who were only thought to be promiscuous or homosexual). As her confession unfolds, however, her substantial complicity in the dynamics of the alcoholic marriage comes into focus, most notably in her continued sexual transgressions and marital infidelity. The entirety of her confession to the Governor in Act Two, scene I further serves to undercut her husband's masculinity, exacerbating the socio-economic futility symbolized in their alcoholic marriage. Temple's characterization of her husband is riddled with sarcasm. She refers to her "Virginia gentleman" husband who went to university "trained … in gentility," only to "relapse … into one of them at least because at least he married me as soon as he could" (Faulkner 113, 114). The contrast in how Gowan and Temple individually conceive of the marriage circumstances is striking. Whether Gowan really believes that marrying Temple was "purest Old Virginia" or not, the act (seemingly) validated him as an honorable southern man. Temple, invoking recovery language for the first time, views the act as a "relapse," implying that this chivalry did no more good than another drink would have.

Temple clearly understands the (gendered) cultural circumstances that have driven her miserable domestic situation enough to note the irony with causticity. Her tone shifts moments later, however, when she recounts the morning of the car accident at the Old Frenchman Place, confessing how "Gow—*we* ran it into the tree" (121, emphasis mine). This admission belies the irony she projects a moment earlier, as she indicts herself as co-conspirator with Gowan eight years prior. Why? For Temple, literal sobriety from drink (regardless of her status as alcoholic or not) provides no "cure" for what truly ails her in Faulkner's post-war milieu. Temple's complicity in Gowan's disease stems from her emasculating him through the confession, as well as in her affliction with a different kind of disease endemic to her gendered role in the alcoholic marriage. Of this disease, Rotskoff states, "If literal sobriety is the goal for people who have overconsumed alcohol to dangerous extremes, the phrase 'emotional sobriety' suggests a person who has 'overindulged' in unsound, excessive emotions.… [Instead of uncontrollable drinking], the metaphorical alcoholic's neurosis presumably stems from unhealthy, uncontrolled *feeling*" (174). Temple easily identifies the cultural absurdity in her husband's sober act of marital chivalry, but she has a more difficult time reconciling her own role in the sicknesses of the alcoholic marriage.

Temple's emotional sobriety has been challenged throughout the marriage, most notably in her sexual liaisons with Pete (the brother of Red who was her lover from *Sanctuary*). Her infidelities are symbolized in the letters[17] she has written to Red, detailing what Kelly Lynch Reames identifies as Temple's most damaging secret, "her open expression of insatiable sexual

[17] Prior to the publication of *Requiem for a Nun*, Estelle Faulkner confronted Joan Williams—an aspiring writer and the woman with whom her husband carried on an affair—about her intentions with Bill. Despite a lack of fireworks in their encounter, it produced an alcoholic episode for Estelle, during which Faulkner confiscated the letter (from Joan, to him) that Estelle had intercepted (Blotner 520). Much of Bill and Joan's correspondence occurred through the mail. One cannot help but notice the parallel between Temple-Red/Pete and Faulkner-Joan, particularly in the symbolism of the letters.

desire for Red," a desire revealing society's "pervasive cultural fear of unrestrained female sexuality" (35). Temple's notorious sexuality not only contributes to her own emotional excess but also to Gowan's emasculation, both as cuckolded husband and societal subordinate. The affair with Pete and the revelation about Red characterize Temple's drinking in a particular way as well, one that undercuts her social status as a proper, middle-class woman and also links her to Nancy in an unfavorable way. Michelle McClellan states how alcoholic women were understood mid-century:

> In addition to motherhood, sexuality was the other central theme in the literature on alcoholic women, both because … for women, drinking and "deviant" sexuality had long been associated. Because of longstanding stereotypes about women's sexual behavior, many experts probably expected to find evidence of promiscuity among some alcoholic women—those whose race, class, or upbringing made them, according to psychiatrists, more likely to engage in deviant sexual behavior, such as prostitutes and other women who were examined in prison settings, [like] African American women (286).

Essentially one and the same, Temple's drinking and sexual selves cannot be separated. The novel marks her relation to alcohol as ambiguous—there is an inherent preoccupation with drinking, yet she is never explicitly registered "sober" or "alcoholic." Her deviant sexuality, then, supplants drinking as her true pathological contribution to the alcoholic marriage. Thus, her disease proves to be emotional (not physiological), and because her sexuality is taboo, "sobriety" becomes essential for the family's long-term success.

But success at what cost? With a child murdered and a marriage in flux, the Stevenses' domestic situation remains precarious at best. As Temple and Gowan seek equilibrium in the alcoholic marriage, they attempt to navigate the modernizing societal waters around them with little success. Their social and economic lot casts them among the throng of other ladder climbers looking to get ahead in an increasingly competitive marketplace. For Temple and Gowan, being "young and modern" means more than the décor that marks their home; it means

embracing a consciousness that identifies the core of social progress as disruptive to an antiquated status quo. Faulkner calls these actions into question, as Temple expresses the disingenuousness behind them:

> [T]he Gowan Stevenses are young and modern, so young and modern that all the other young country-club set applauded when they took an ex-dope-fiend nigger whore out of the gutter to nurse their children, because the rest of the young country-club set didn't know that it wasn't the Gowan Stevenses but Temple Drake who had chosen the ex-dope-fiend nigger whore for the reason that an ex-dope-fiend nigger whore was the only animal in Jefferson that spoke Temple Drake's language (Faulkner 136).

Temple's choice of words is telling; her "young and modern" gesture reveals how the complex social forces working on both Temple and Gowan recasts their inclusion of Nancy into something not charitable, but, according to Brannon Costello, racially paternalistic. Costello defines racial paternalism as one method of "climbing the ladder of class" which functions as "an economic and social performance in which upwardly mobile white southerners demonstrate their allegedly essential superiority by treating African Americans as inferior and childlike" (17). The consequence of such actions, Costello warns, is that "relying on a performance of racial paternalism to validate an 'aristocratic' class position commits white southerners to an attitude of sycophancy, a permanent performance that keeps them from meaningful engagement with the world and with each other" (17). Temple and Gowan's social charity remains inherently limited in that it was never actually charity in the first place. The paternalistic gesture toward Nancy, then, further insulates them from addressing the cruel realities of a racially unequal South. For her part, Temple seeks Nancy as someone similar to her sexually. Nancy is an "ex-dope-fiend nigger whore," differing from Temple in skin color only. And while raising the children enacts a measure of good (Nancy suffered abuse on the streets), employing Nancy becomes an act of self-interest perpetuated by Temple's emotional drunkenness and Gowan's racial paternalism.

Reames understands the Temple-Nancy relationship differently: "Despite their ultimate separation and failure, the novel thus suggests that women's alliance across racial and class differences empowers their resistance and is a necessary precursor to social change" (32). By the end of the novel an alliance of sorts indeed forms, as Nancy's actions allow Temple the means through which to contextualize how her own transgressions have affected her family. Still, Nancy has been deemed essentially inferior by Temple and Gowan. Temple acknowledges that her hiring Nancy was forced as much as it was selfish; even at the behest of Uncle Gavin, Gowan remains unable to empathize, referring to Nancy only and always as "nigger whore." What remains in the Stevenses' domestic triad are three individuals dislocated from a cohesive family whole: Temple and Gowan struggle to remain sober, and Nancy will hang for her crime.

The lack of genuine progress in the novel exists because of a wholesale failure by the faux "young and modern" to recognize the reality of stagnant race relations as being one among many of the moral malignancies in an inherently backward regional culture. Leigh Anne Duck articulates this nicely, where the novel as a whole remains "equivocal, sensitive to racial injustice and particularly economic oppression but also to the effective charge of the past" (225). Temple and Gowan "seek, in cultivating a certain notion of southern culture, to shape local social structures without ever having to engage in an argument about [racist, social regressive] contemporary institutions" (226). Thus, their empty attempt at charity in employing Nancy reads as lip service only, void of anything progressive. This makes the impetus of Nancy's crime all the more ambiguous. Early readings of the novel view the murder as a "selfless sacrifice" meant only to "save" Temple from her corruptible self (Polk xxiii),[18] but in identifying Temple's moral shortcomings, such readings fail to account for the social depravity of an entire region. Zieger

[18] According to Duck, "[Temple] recognizes Nancy's acts not simply as a crime but rather as the result of profound ethical confusion—both Nancy's and her own—resulting from histories outside of which their acts cannot be properly assessed" (229).

cites one late nineteenth-century southern text that frames the South's social plight as either "a ravaged postwar condition [that] was the consequence of its own depravity or merely the result of an unfortunate affliction" (102). Projecting her assessment on to the historical milieu of this novel, then the metaphor of disease and addiction serves appropriately, though not in a *postwar* South but rather a *reluctantly modern* one.

The use of addiction in the novel—both literal and figurative—particularly in light of recovery from it challenges some critical notions that the characters and the entire region are still "doomed" at the end. For Gowan at least, his sobriety signifies a genuine progression in treatment for his physiological disease. Furthermore, as narratives of addiction and recovery evolved to reflect the increasing medical-scientific value given to alcoholism, sober emasculation in the modern workplace became less of an issue. While this certainly makes his sobriety less of a gender and class pejorative, it hardly pardons Gowan from his complicity in the narrative drama. Regardless of his sobriety, Gowan remains fundamentally incapable of recognizing how the South's backward cultural ethos contributes to the tragedy befalling his family. Personal sobriety suffices to "cure" his addiction, but it cannot dismiss his "Old Virginia" in either the economic or domestic spheres. Temple's addiction proves more elusive, and thus does a prescription for personal redemption. At the very least, the tragedy and its fallout provide a measure of therapy for her personal ills. By the novel's end, however, any emotional "cure" seems undercut by her seemingly inevitable re-immersion into the alcoholic marriage. After she pronounces "Doom" for all, she robotically answers to Gowan's off-stage beckoning.

Gavin Stevens's pronouncement that "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (80) pinpoints the South's inability to grasp the nation's progressive view of time in the novel. While the Stevenses' alcoholic marriage remains scarred from the wounds of a distinctly southern form,

the domestic discord that plagues them suggests a more fundamental confusion stemming from the South's encounter with modernity at-large. The South of the novel turns its collective glance backward despite the swirl of progress elsewhere. What Faulkner presents, then, is a novel about the modernizing South in conflict with the larger nation-state as it negotiates between social progress and its own cultural survival. While Temple and Gowan reflect the veneer of material success, either individually or together, they cannot reconcile the implications of being "young and modern," since the vacuous charity toward Nancy indirectly leads to the murder of their daughter. Because the past is not even past in *Requiem*'s South, the inclusion of Nancy into the family's "modern" fold merely contributes to the ambiguity straining the alcoholic marriage. Temple and Gowan's marriage rests upon a foundation of guilt and Old Virginia chivalry and, therefore, saves social face in a way that fails to address either the true seed of their marital discontent or the fundamental limitations of their social ascension. Faulkner defines their domestic and professional purgatories in terms recalling the rising ubiquity of the Sobriety Movement, specifically jargon associated with Alcoholics Anonymous. The deployment of these terms to characterize the essence of the marriage suggests that the whole notion of "recovery" be challenged. While Temple and Gowan seem to have mastered their alcoholisms (at least temporarily) and become "cured" of a physiological disease, their professional and domestic discontents metastasize into something incurable, as the South that hangs Nancy continues to resist the pull of progress elsewhere. Temple and Gowan may be sober, but, the temptations of the alcoholic marriage become too much to resist. Thus, Temple's "Doomed" announcement becomes nothing less than an indictment of the entire region.

Chapter Two
"Something besides a corroded liver": Jack B.'s Alcoholic Narrative in *All the King's Men*

> Then plaudits would ring in my ears, and peals of laughter ring again in my deserted chamber; then would succeed stillness only broken by the beatings of my agonized heart, which felt that the gloss of respectability had worn off and exposed my threadbare condition. To drown these reflections I would drink, not from love of the taste of the liquor, but to become so stupefied by its fumes as to steep my sorrows in a half oblivion; and from this miserable stupor I would wake to a fuller consciousness of my situation, and again would I banish my reflections by liquor.
>
> John B. Gough, *An Autobiography by John B. Gough*

Both *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* approach the South's reluctant response to social change by examining how the circumstances informing Temple's and Gowan's drinking parallel a broader national consciousness that conceived of alcoholism as a disease. Essential to Faulkner's critique of how antiquated southern hegemony was perpetuated by the hypocrisy of moral legislation (Prohibition) is the futility of and fallout from the Stevenses' predicament. Gowan's alcoholism, though seemingly under control through a self-mandated sobriety, precludes important participation in the burgeoning capitalist social economy necessary for class ascension and material stability. Temple's sexual dalliances problematize her status as an upper-class woman, and the precarious state of her sobriety parallels the self-destructive choices she continues to make despite their social fallout. Where I argue that Faulkner uses alcohol and drinking to betray a biting critique of a region (and two individuals) seemingly incapable of embracing progress, in this chapter I consider two different problem drinkers and their troubling relation to modernity in the South, though in Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* (1946) the overriding metaphor vis-à-vis social progress and drinking is *recovery*. As a Friend of Bill F., Warren uses alcohol to suggest that drinking occupies a significant symbolic role in the novel, one that necessarily affects how Willie Stark and Jack Burden are to be understood as having either failed or succeeded at confronting the modern world.

Alcoholics Anonymous' eponymous "Big Book" (1939) is comprised of, among other things, alcoholic narratives of confession by reformed drunkards, each of whom shares the pitfalls of addictive despair and, ultimately, the bliss of sobriety.[1] The alcoholic narrative functions as an act of confession—told in hindsight from the vantage of achieved sobriety—where recovering addicts recount their drinking lives so as to more fully conceive of the process by which they become sober. For these recovering alcoholics to progress through treatment, they have to admit to the extent of their addiction and, more importantly, understand their complicity in how alcohol compromised their lives and the lives of others. One such narrative, "Our Southern Friend," follows a preacher's son descending into alcoholic purgatory in college and beyond. Of his first drunken episode, the narrator states, "I staggered to the bathroom. Shouldn't have drunk so much or so fast. But I knew how to handle it now. I'd drink like a gentleman after this" (461). The assuredness he feels regarding "how to handle it now" quickly fades, as his dependency escalates. Unable to steady himself during a college exam, "I leave the room, which the honor system allows. I go to my room. I pour out half a tumbler of grain alcohol and fill it with ginger. Now back to the exam" (462). Toeing the line between sober and alcoholic, the narrator realizes that, despite the temporary salve the drunkenness affords him, he continues to feel "still greater inferiority" about himself. The drinking increases after college to the point where his daily existence becomes dictated by the when and where of the next sip. When morning comes, "I feel horrible. A little drink will put me on my feet. But it takes others to keep me there" (463). With death as the only alternative, he seeks medical help: "I am in the hospital

[1] I hesitate to offer a more binding definition of the alcoholic narrative, since, as I will show, varying treatments for alcoholism contextualize this confession differently. The alcoholic narrative will be examined in great detail throughout the chapter both as a function of Jack's literal sobriety, as well as how he conceives of the metaphorical recovery of the modernizing South. For now, the alcoholic narrative needs to be understood as a self-analysis told from a place of sobriety. I complicate this idea later in the chapter.

for alcoholics. I am an alcoholic. The insane asylum lies ahead. Could I have myself locked up at home? One more foolish idea. I might go out West on a ranch where I couldn't get anything to drink" (465). This alcoholic asylum is temporary, however, and the narrator only achieves true sobriety upon choosing not to succumb to the depths of alcoholic despair. He concludes, "I cannot see the cause of this temptation now. But I am to learn later that it began with my desire for material success becoming greater than my interest in the welfare of my fellow man" (470).

"Our Southern Friend" reveals how the alcoholic narrative functions as a mechanism necessary for sobriety. Consider the ways in which the anonymous narrator crafts his story: the foray into drinking proves relatively harmless at first; as the pressures of university life increase so, too, does the frequency of imbibing; he labels himself specifically as "an alcoholic," while considering other means through which he might become sober ("I might go out West"); finally, he provides insight explaining the psychological root of his drinking, "my desire for material success" trumping "my interest in the welfare of my fellow man." Speaking as a recovering alcoholic with the privilege of hindsight, the narrator pinpoints the psychological insecurity that led to his problem drinking in the first place. Jack Burden, the first-person narrator of *All the King's Men*, shares commonality with "Our Southern Friend" both in actual drinking history and, more importantly, in the manner in which he narrates his own story. Like the unnamed narrator, Jack confesses to his own problematic drinking past, finally achieving a measure of spiritual clarity that parallels his literal sobriety. Unlike the narrator, though, Jack's route from drunk to sober proves far more circuitous, which characterizes his drinking as something more consequential—and, conversely, less identifiable—than a selfish desire for material success. Jack's confession considers not only the means through which he stops drinking but how his reluctance to accept the past makes him increasingly vulnerable to the broader social conditions

responsible for his anxiety. Jack suffers from more than habitual drunkenness; his problem drinking gestures toward the entire South, a region with a troubled relation to the forces of social progress brought on by modernity[2] in the first half of the twentieth-century. Modernity ran counter to how the regionally-minded South confronted the tides of social progress occurring in the rest of the country, particularly in the industrialized North. For the South, the offshoots from modernity signified any threat to the region's economic and cultural tradition in the name of "progress." Jack stops drinking by story's end, but the trajectory and complexity of his narrative complicates an easy understanding of his recovery, particularly when the symbolic value of recovery signifies something beyond literal sobriety, instead pointing to a regional (southern) condition that Warren critiques through the metaphor of alcoholism.

In his biography of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder William Wilson, Matthew J. Raphael situates A.A. in a figurative space specific to the social, cultural, and historical contexts emerging in the early twentieth-century:

> Alcoholics Anonymous was a brainchild of *modernity*. It reflected the life course of a particular group of Americans: a generational cohort of professional, Protestant, white men born late in the nineteenth century. Men such as Bill Wilson, whose coming of age coincided with Prohibition, whose excessive

[2] In his book *The Fourth Ghost*, Robert Brinkmeyer posits Adam Stanton and Willie Stark at competing ideological poles in *All the King's Men*, with Stanton representing the "man of idea … a romantic idealist who believes in a perfect world of goodness and order from which modernity has fallen—and which everyone should now devote themselves to reconstructing" (270-271). Here, modernity is seen as something inherently bad in its compromising of tradition and value held dear in the South at this time. I argue, as I do in the previous chapter, that the South's hesitance to embrace modernity should not be understood as something noble. Therefore, modernity represents the social, economic, and cultural forces meant to progress the nation beyond the stasis perpetuating inequality. What complicates this idea in the novel is the fact that Willie Stark challenges the status quo (acting in accordance with the modernity against which southern traditionalists fought), but takes his stance to dangerous—eventually fascist—lengths. Philosopher Marshall Berman articulates the force of "modernity" in terms relevant to Brinkmeyer's fascist reading of the novel, as well as to the ways in which Jack drinks to more fully grasp the ambiguities endemic to the changing world. He states, "To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction. It is to be overpowered by the immense bureaucratic organizations that have the power to control and often to destroy all communities, values, lives" (13). Yet, for all of the fright modernity brings, it also allows for individual and collective excellence in the face of such confusion. Berman continues, "and yet to be undeterred in our determination to face these forces, to fight to change their world and make it our own. It is to be both revolutionary and conservative: alive to new possibilities for experience and adventure, frightened by the nihilistic depths to which so many modern adventures lead, longing to create and to hold on to something real even as everything melts" (13-14).

> drinking paralleled the speculative binge of the 1920s stock market, and whose drunken misery bottomed out during the Great Depression, in the depths of which A.A. itself was born (49, emphasis mine).

Implied here is the idea that a broader cultural malaise endemic to the modern world induced men to drink alcoholically, but that this historical moment also facilitated a movement leading to successful recovery from alcoholism. While modernity encouraged the notion of individual recovery from alcoholism, it also became symptomatic of the competing ideological poles within the nation-state itself as the U.S. South remained resistant to progress. One need look no further than the Agrarians' 1930 manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* to see how many (though not all) southern intellectual and political voices rejected the progress promised by modern (northern) industrialism, instead arguing that a return to agrarianism was the means through which to preserve regional cultural tradition. Influential though the Agrarians were, their ideological program could not co-exist with modernity, as the grim societal realities stemming from the Great Depression stymied their anti-industrial sentiment.

The clash of the (northern) condition of modernity and the (southern) agrarian response to it produced not only dissent from within each region but also confusion for those—like Bill W.—who were coming of age during a time of profound social change and resistance to it. The consequences for this ideological netherworld were serious, particularly for problem drinkers. If successful treatment for alcoholism emerged from an ideological wellspring of modernity, then how effectively could such treatment work if the alcoholic was literally and metaphorically tied to the very region that resisted progress? More precisely, how does the achievement of sobriety (a "modern" invention, through "modern" means) by the (white) southern alcoholics considered in this chapter and beyond complicate their situation as southerners committed to social progress? Furthermore, how can such individual rehabilitation work alongside a diseased

collective consciousness that is also clearly in need of treatment? In tracing the alcoholic narratives of confession in the Big Book, Raphael suggests that this text "belongs in the context of [the] alcoholic novels" written by those "that came of age during Prohibition and revolutionized American literature, in part by their jaunty attitude toward drinking" (13), those ranging from Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) to Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). In this chapter, I add *All the King's Men* to the list, as it fits within Raphael's chronology of alcoholic narratives (1926-1947) and its narrator uses the story of Willie Stark to articulate and contextualize his own path to sobriety. Jack's narrative of alcoholic recovery begins with his admission to having a drinking problem, and, through this self-guided confession, evolves into a broader (metaphorical) investigation of a region searching for an ideological compromise between a hegemonic past preserving the status quo and the pseudo-progressive (and, in the end, pseudo-fascist) ways that Willie Stark attempts to facilitate change. As Jack confronts modernity, he uses his alcoholism to conceptualize the regional maladies that have halted forward movement in the South for far too long.

In this chapter, I argue that Warren's use of alcohol as a cultural and material marker pushes the novel's critique beyond a mere warning against fascist state ideology, instead offering the possibility that, through recovery from alcoholism, both Jack and the South might achieve the means to engage modernity and successfully negotiate "the awful responsibility of Time." Essential to Jack's alcoholic narrative is how class lines—perpetual strongholds of hegemony in the South—uphold very specific patterns of consumption, serving as boundaries impeding the social and political progress that Stark aggressively seeks. In examining Stark's alcoholic excesses, this chapter defines the entirety of Jack's narrative as an extended confessional metaphor of recovery from alcoholism, since he, like Stark, consumes destructively. The novel

pits Stark's pseudo-fascist political progress and Jack's recovery at odds with one another, as a sober Burden finds himself uncomfortable next to the drunken Stark and his increasingly unscrupulous policies. Stark's self-destruction manifests itself externally, while Jack's does so internally, and each faces a distinct set of problems exacerbated by alcohol.

To address the complexities of Willie's and Jack's drinking problems, the novel considers alcoholism on both the literal and metaphorical levels. As Stark's alcoholism consumes him, he continues polarizing his constituency until, with political rivals mobilizing everywhere, there is nothing left to consume and both he and (his vision for) the state are obliterated. Conversely, as Jack distances himself from the Boss's moral and political tumult, he achieves literal sobriety. His recovery, then, anticipates the self-reflection necessary to transcend both his tenuous relation to the past and his symbolic association as Stark's ideological ally. Essential to Jack's recovery is the confessional aspect of telling the story and how such transmission, when complete, functions therapeutically so that Jack fully conceives of his forgivable role in the drama. Jack's recovery serves as a middle ground between the ideologies of new blood politics embodied in Willie Stark and the old guard embodied in Judge Irwin, implying that neither pole suffices to progress the region beyond its current state. Not unlike the confessional narratives of alcoholic perdition that characterize stories in the "Big Book," Jack's confession amounts to a particular type of admission to his addictive drinking, which is essential to his literal and metaphorical survivals.

Although I position alcohol and drinking as crucial to the novel's ethos, many substantive critiques center on the political implications of Stark's populist demagoguery. Though Warren cringed at the novel's being categorized simply as "political," the plot absolutely centers on the notorious gubernatorial career of Willie Stark and his wresting political power from the clutches

of the state's ruling aristocracy. This critical line, repeated though it may be, is both correct and unavoidable; at some level, *All the King's Men* undoubtedly *is* a political novel. Other angles focus on Jack Burden's existential journey through history and his achievement of, in Warren's own words, "osmosis of being." Victor Strandberg locates the novel's central theme in Jack's struggle with and discovery of a self-identity capable of confronting the "awful responsibility of Time," privileging osmosis of being as the goal toward which the novel's characters strive. The characters should be "relating themselves to the totality of time and nature and society" instead of "narrowing their identity to a basis of fame, sexual prowess, success in business, or membership in a philosophical, religious, or political sect" (Clark 123). Clearly Jack and Willie occupy opposite ends of osmosis of being. While the critical spectrum cannot possibly be reduced to the polemical Politics-History binary, both of these hermeneutical camps contribute valuable insights. There are, however, other ways to read the novel at the political and philosophical levels that illuminate previous critical stances while also challenging their primacy.

True enough, the exploits of Warren's southern demagogue Willie Stark speak volumes about political power unrestrained. Central though it might be to the minutia of plot and ideology, it is the *presentation* of politics that bears most profoundly on the novel. As Jack admits, "the story of Willie Stark and the story of Jack Burden are, in one sense, one story" (Warren 157). Burden's sentiment operates on several levels, most obviously in the fact that he is Stark's confidante and political sounding board. On a deeper level, their stories converge because, over the doomed course of their affiliation, each discovers an essential truth about himself, which, in the end, represents some measure of either hope or futility for their symbolic location in the South as America trudges through the Great Depression and nears World War II. Willie Stark quite literally feels the pain of his political missteps, and no amount of bullying can

fully circumvent the existing power structures that had so long ordered the state's social and political scenes. Jack Burden, however, emerges reborn at the novel's end, having used the process of narrating the story to gain a measure of therapeutic clarity regarding his role in the catastrophe stemming from Stark's reign. More importantly, though, Jack begins to overcome his existential conflict with history, specifically his (in)ability to ascertain certain truths from a past that has been riddled with emotional pain and moral uncertainty. Jack survives his ordeal. Willie does not.

Although both Willie and Jack share a journey, their paths diverge in more significant ways than Jack admits, and this figurative splintering speaks to Warren's concerns about the South's social, political, and economic situations in the pre-war years. What is absolutely essential to note in the novel's splitting of Jack and Willie is that Jack, alone, articulates this fact. Unlike the two Faulkner works from the previous chapter, Warren's novel depends on the first-person representation of events as social commentary, and while Jack's background as a student of history certainly lends itself nicely to a sweeping account of Willie Stark, its most significant function rests in its negotiations along social class lines. Jack Burden comes from a place of privilege, growing up in an exclusive enclave known as Burden's Landing where he was raised among luminaries such as the former Governor and a prominent judge. While Jack is afforded the tenets relative to his class, he spends most of his time eschewing such privilege, instead choosing a muckraking career as a journalist before he signs on with Stark. Willie—as is the case with the real-life Huey Long—rises to power despite humble beginnings, and he surrounds himself primarily (Jack excepted) with people of similar rank. The class binary neatly divides political sensibility as well—the elite oppose Stark vehemently, while the "hicks and rednecks" generally support him. Warren does not stop with class as a marker of figurative division,

however. Perhaps as much as social class, the most important—yet largely unspoken—polarizer is alcohol. Nearly every character in the novel drinks substantially, and each character's relation to the bottle paints him or her in a particular way that cleaves to social and political alignment.

Important in understanding the relationship between drinking and class is *how* people drink and what the specifics of such consumption suggest about Warren's broader critical concerns. Where social class remains either a barrier or a throughway for political maneuvering, alcohol attaches itself accordingly, and the way people drink, I argue, reflects the anxiety regarding their class-born ability to participate in some measure of progress. Consider briefly these three examples: violently insecure about the political shackles attached to her as a working women from impoverished roots, Sadie Burke's drinking aligns itself with that of many female drinkers at the time in that she is both promiscuous and, at times, masculine; the de facto voting scale-tipper due to his irreproachable social position, Judge Irwin is rarely seen without a drink nearby, and his scotch highball ethos parallels an upper-crust sensibility that his privileged past is without secrets; Willie Stark's first bender catalyzes his sudden transformation from hick lawyer into demagogue, creating not only a political force but a destructive alcoholic. By the end of the novel, Sadie has been institutionalized, Irwin commits suicide, and Stark is murdered. Unable to transcend the fates linking the particularities of their consumption to their social and political predispositions, each is destroyed when he or she attempts to wade into the waters of the other. Drinking out of accordance to class lines creates destructive situations that make social progress appear impossible.

Unlike the examples just mentioned, Jack's consumption operates in important contrast. As these characters increasingly rely on alcohol, Jack's imbibing decreases to the point of near abstinence. Where Jack's crisscrossing of social class boundaries proves beneficial to his

professional standing, drinking proves to be another matter altogether, for it is within Jack's articulation of (alcoholic) drinking that every character can(not) transcend social class limitations. How people consume relates specifically to where they come from, and no amount of social ascension compensates for this. For Jack, then, recovery becomes the only means for any character to achieve redemption. As the narrative drives toward its violent climax, Jack articulates his situation in alcoholic-specific terms:

> If I wasn't having one tonight it wasn't because I had passed beyond it into a state of beatitude. Perhaps it was something had passed out of me. Virtue by defect. Abstinence by nausea. When they give you the cure, they put something in your likker. You are like Pavlov's dog whose saliva starts every time he hears the bell. Only with you the reflex works so that every time you catch a whiff of likker to even think of it, your stomach turns upside down. Somebody must have slipped the stuff into my good times, for now I just didn't want any more good time (370).

Jack's aversion to "any more good time" is not to be understood as something negative or obstructive, but completely necessary to achieve osmosis of being. Indeed, the absence of what had "passed out of me," effectively "cures" him, and through the metaphor of the Keeley Cure,[3] Jack specifies that the habitual drinking that has plagued the other characters no longer has a dangerous hold on him. Jack's newfound virtue is conceived as the *absence* of something, the symbolic regurgitation of the figurative poison that had been ingested, *ad nauseum*, by all throughout the narrative. Thus, Jack's achievement of existential clarity requires him to be sober.

[3] See William L. White's excellent work *Slaying the Dragon: the History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (1998) for expansive overview of addiction and treatment. White gives ample space to Dr. Leslie Keeley's eponymous cure for alcoholism, the most widespread and effective treatment for addiction in the late nineteenth century. Although Jack does not mention the Keeley Cure by name, he clearly evokes the spirit of this treatment. The philosophy behind the Keeley Cure was to induce a physiological aversion to alcohol through a two-pronged approach (the extended treatment offered at the Keeley Institutes relied on other measures to ensure sobriety, many of which anticipate the group therapy model used in A.A.): "Newcomers [to the cure] were provided all the whiskey they needed or demanded until they lost the appetite for it—usually within three or four days" (White 54). This kamikaze approach preceded the actual dose concocted by Keeley doctors, "four daily injections of the Double Chloride of Gold remedy" (54). Keeley stated that this analgesic affected addicts at the cellular level, making them physically averse to spirits. A series of events led to the downfall of the Keeley Institute, though it remained somewhat intact until the 1960s. Interestingly, Keeley patients were encouraged to join A.A., as it rose to prominence in the 1940s and 1950s (61).

As the minutia of politics and power rot the moral centers of the others, so too does booze corrode their livers, and the mortal fates of drinkers versus those of non-drinkers in the novel fall distinctly on each side of the class drinking line. Jack's newfound ability to confront his past while every other character fights to deny, rewrite, justify, or ignore it suggests that recovery is the most significant factor in his fate. His introspection at this moment emphasizes the recurring tropes in the novel: alcohol and drinking or, perhaps more applicable, alcohol*ism* and *excessive* drinking.

One of the primary aims of this chapter is to establish that both Jack Burden and Willie Stark suffer—in varying degrees—from alcoholism,[4] something that influential addiction specialist E.M. Jellinek broadly defines as "any use of alcoholic beverages that causes any damage to the individual or society or both" (35). The broadness of Jellinek's definition allows room to specify further the seriousness of the affliction (particularly with Stark), as well as to connect how the disease relates to Jack and the South. Although nearly every other character drinks prodigiously, Willie's and Jack's ultimate success or failure depends on the particularities and trajectories of their consumption. This is not to imply that Warren consciously problematizes their drinking as something specifically "diseased," though I do conclude that this proves to be the case. My primary analytical frame forthcoming considers how booze operates on the literal

[4] Jellinek's seminal study *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism* (1960) advocates for the medicalization of alcoholism. He expands on his broad definition of alcoholism, going so far as to identify five connotations ("types") of alcoholism. Alpha alcoholism shows a psychological dependence on booze, but it is not considered part of a "progressive process" (36). Beta alcoholism can result in psycho-physiological impairment (cirrhosis), though not necessarily from a dependence on alcohol. Gamma alcoholism shows increased tolerance, withdrawal, and loss of control (among other more serious side effects) and shows a progression from psychological to physical dependence on alcohol (37). Delta alcoholism shares the traits of Gamma, but with the added quality of an inability to abstain (38). Epsilon alcoholism is hardly mentioned and not clearly defined. Of these five different types of alcoholism, Jellinek only counts gamma and delta as diseases, since these alcoholics display a change in physiopathologic processes. Jellinek faced pointed criticism at the time regarding the veracity his work. I am not interested in characterizing alcoholism with any prevailing, unified definition (if one even exists), which is why the vagueness of Jellinek's definition serves my purposes nicely. Tying Jack and Willie to one of these five models is not paramount to my analysis, since, in varying degrees, each drinks problematically.

and metaphorical levels to produce a broader conceptual understanding of whether or not, in the end, Jack is indeed "cured" and what this case suggests about how Warren's South could meaningfully engage with the modernizing nation-state at a time of significant upheaval both domestically and abroad. If, as I argue, the telling of the story operates as Jack's alcoholic confession, then it is essential to begin with his characterization of Willie Stark and how alcohol affects, influences, and shapes this portrayal. Since my argument traces the repelling trajectories of Stark's and Burden's respective drunkenness and sobriety, then in order for Jack to gradually come to terms with the implications of his movement away from the bottle, he must first conceptualize how the Boss becomes consumed by it.

In a novel about the rise and fall of a hill person populist narrated by an educated man with Delta planter sensibilities,[5] social class disparity informs the ways that drinking functions. Willie Stark's evolution as a drinker mirrors his political movement from soft-spoken "Cousin" to pontifical "Boss," and this dramatic shift suggests that consumption plays an important part in considering if Stark's ideology[6] could flourish in the South at this time. In the end, booze

[5] Such indifference to political progress manifested itself in the gap between Louisiana's privileged, the Delta planters, and its most marginalized, the hill people. Living a twentieth-century example of taxation without representation, the hill people (who populated the soil of Long's birthplace) resented the obvious hypocrisy exuded by their southern rivals: "The hill people, with Presbyterian rigidity, see the inhabitants of the Delta living a riotous life of drunken orgies, during which time they spend on booze and vain, heartless women, the money that the tax collector, the banker, the railroad agent and the grain elevator operator steals from the children of the hills" (Sillars 119). This inverted Robin Hood dynamic proved particularly damaging, given the Progressive Era mentality of rooting out corruption and enacting measures to address society's disinherited. The aristocracy never went far enough in acknowledging the reality of the state's situation, as their "real sin is their failure to recognize and alleviate the economic conditions of the poorer people of the hills," and "their conservatism is seldom respectable in dealing with the real socio-economic problems of the area and their legality is constructed to control such socio-economic improvement" (123-124). Enter Huey Long.

[6] The very presence of Huey Long in the state capitol represented an inherent double-bind, since the ends of his legislation rarely—it is often argued—justified their means. Historian T. Harry Williams notes that the Kingfish's detractors are correct in pointing to his inordinate concentration of power as being the defining feature of his nefarious political tenure. However, "had [he not] been willing and able to take power … he could not have lifted Louisiana from a condition of near feudalism into the modern world almost overnight or inspired thousands of poor white people all over the South to a vision of a better life or introduced into all of Southern politics, which had been perversely romantic, a saving element of economic realism" (21). True, the pre-Huey days showed an immense gap between the upper and lower classes in Louisiana. Unwilling to cede its social-political power, the ruling class did

changes from being a rhetorical crutch to the fuel of alcoholic fury that contributes to his demise. As a means of political analysis, Warren's representation of drinking serves a twofold function. First, it shows Stark's own descent into alcoholism. Although drinking works to his advantage initially, it blinds him to the long term fallout of his actions, and his political control suffers because of this. On a broader level, Stark's drinking functions as a metaphor for addiction that anticipates his failure in advancing the agenda of a welfare state. Stark's implementation of welfare policies dangerously oscillates between progressive and fascist, and his metaphorical addiction to power devolves into a blinding belief that wholesale opposition to the state's elitists' interests can actually reverse the course of socio-economic disparity between rich and poor. I begin my analysis of Willie Stark and alcohol by examining how he transitions from sober to drunk.

Jack's first introduction to Cousin Willie Stark occurs in 1922 (17 years before the present time from which Jack narrates) at Slade's place, a small town speakeasy serving as the gathering point for local politicians and backdoor drinkers alike. At the time, Stark is the Mason County Treasurer—a no-name really—who just happens to accompany a colleague to a meeting with Tiny Duffy ("a city-hall slob" Tax Assessor at the time). Initially, Duffy is reluctant to engage in conversation with the two small-town politicians, since he "was never talkative in the morning before he had worried down two or three drinks" (Warren 13). When Slade offers beer

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little for the betterment of the state. Consequently, infrastructure and social programs lacked severely—by the time Long took office, there were fewer than 300 miles of paved roads and only four bridges in the entire state (17)! The entrenched political mechanism was not only powerful but adept at resisting (or ignoring) the forces of progress elsewhere; it was "capable of meeting demands for social change and absorbing and blunting them. It had, for example, to deal with the threat posed by the Progressive Movement, which affected Louisiana and the South somewhat later than other sections" (17). A collective loss of faith in the system perpetuated a broader political despair: "At the beginning of the twentieth century, Louisianians could count on the fingers of one hand those major public servants who in all Louisiana history had been honest and *progressive, active in behalf of the small people*, and given to implementing campaign promises with administrative performance" (Carter 3, emphasis mine). While resistance to the system certainly emerged, it was never able to make significant inroads in shifting the balance of power.

to the entire table, Willie politely refuses on account that "'[My wife] Lucy don't favor drinking … For a fact'" (17). When Tiny pressures Willie to cave, he remains steadfast, prompting Slade to proclaim, "'I sells beer to them as wants it. I ain't making nobody drink it'" (17). Other than the fact that Jack identifies this moment as the time when he first meets Willie, the scene seems inconsequential. This episode is important, though, in how it establishes the centrality of alcohol and drinking to the novel's critical concerns. In what becomes a hallmark of Stark's reign, he does not forget Slade's treatment, and this seemingly insignificant gesture receives recognition in time: "Well, anyway, when Repeal came and mailmen had to use Mack trucks to haul the applications for licenses over to the City Hall, Slade got a license. He got a license immediately, and he got a swell location" (17). Stark's payback assumes added significance in that it stems from an incident pertaining to alcohol, and Slade's post-Repeal success positions the novel's symbolic location of political action within the space of alcohol consumption. Once averse to drink because "Lucy don't favor [it]," the Boss now privileges Slade's loyalty and his line of business, a sentiment that touches on the convergence of politics and consumption, or the politics of consumption.

When a handful of children die in a schoolhouse fire, Cousin Willie Stark ascends the political ranks, since, several years before, he had opposed the city's plan to build the school in question with inferior materials and labor. As Jack sarcastically notes, Willie becomes "the fellow on the Lord's side and the Lord had given a sign" (71). Divine intervention quickly proves insufficient for electability, though, and Stark encounters resistance when "folks didn't care much which side of a question was the Lord's side" (71). Stark's naiveté is exacerbated by a political strategy that attempts to educate voters on the state's need for, among other things, tax reform. Not surprisingly, voters do not respond to his informative speeches, something Jack

laments candidly: "'Hell, make 'em cry, make 'em laugh, make 'em think you're their weak erring pal … But for Jesus' sake don't try to improve their minds'" (72). Convincing though Jack may be, his advice falls on deaf ears, and it is not until Sadie accidentally lets slip the fact that Willie has been put into the gubernatorial race solely to split the MacMurfee vote that he changes. What follows eventually propels Stark to the state capital. After contemplating Sadie's remarks, Stark "reached over to the table and picked up the [whiskey] bottle and poured enough into a glass to floor the Irish and drank it off neat." Jack responds, "'Hey,' I said, 'take it easy, you aren't used to that stuff.' … He reached for the bottle and did it again" (81). As Sadie continues badgering Stark, he drinks more: "He took it, poured it, drank, set the glass down deliberately, and said: 'I better not. I better not get used to [the idea of not being Governor].'" As the liquor does its work, Stark's tone turns violent very quickly, until, at last, he passes out. When Jack returns to the room, "The bottle on the table was empty" (82). Jack's recollection of the scene casts Willie's metamorphosis as something more symbolically weighted than merely the first time Stark gets drunk: "For a second or two I thought that Willie had left. Then I saw the finished product. *It* was lying on the floor" (83, emphasis mine). Jack's choice of pronoun categorizes Stark as neither Cousin Willie nor the Boss, but the sloppy, unidentifiable "it" that has crossed the symbolic threshold into a career of booze and politics.

What follows this initial binge is a dramatic transformation in Stark's political rhetoric that exemplifies an emerging self-awareness. The next morning, Jack coaches Willie through the hangover so that he can make his scheduled speech. After Willie vomits, Jack goes to the only means he knows to improve Stark's condition: "'More coffee?' [Stark] asked. 'No,' I said, and unstrapped my suitcase and got out the second bottle. I poured some in a tumbler and took it to him. 'According to old folks,' I said, 'the best way is to put two shots of absinthe on a little

cracked ice and float a shot of rye. But we can't be fancy. Not with Prohibition'" (88). Jack repeatedly "give[s] a treatment," dosing no less than four drinks to Willie as he prepares for the speech. As they approach the fairgrounds by car, "Willie put out his hand and laid it on the flask. 'Gimme that thing,' he said." Jack's protestations against too much "treatment" go unrecognized: "But he already had it in his mouth by that time and the sound of it gargling down would have drowned the sound of my words even if I had kept on wasting them. When he handed the thing back to me, there wasn't enough to make it worth my while putting it in my pocket" (88). Having finished a pint of (highly potent) liquor on the heels of a considerable bender the night before, Stark is clearly intoxicated—"'Hair [of the dog], hell,' [Sadie] said, 'he must have swallowed the dog'" (90). Tiny also notices Willie's state, to which Jack tellingly replies, "'He never touches the stuff,' I said. 'It's just he's been on the road to Damascus and he saw a great light and he's got the blind staggers'" (89). Jack's ironic reference to the Apostle Paul's conversion conveys a deeper significance to the episode unfolding. Willie Stark has indeed been converted—a symbolic baptism by fire (water) conceived of in explicitly Biblical terms—and he sees himself in the midst of a moral conundrum where he represents common Good against the Evil political establishment. Consider the preachy verbiage throughout Stark's speech (told in the third-person): "'And it came to him with the powerful force of God's own lightning'" (91) that he was set up to divide the MacMurfee and Harrison factions. As Willie moves to the story's dramatic conclusion, he identifies Tiny Duffy as the puppet master behind the whole scheme: "'There is the Judas Iscariot, the lick-spittle, the nose-wiper!'" (92). Stark shoves Duffy off the stage, before finishing the speech with what becomes the basis for his populist platform: "'Whatever a hick wants he's got to do for himself. Nobody in a fine automobile and sweet-

talking is going to do it for him. When I come back to run for Governor again, I'm coming on my own and I'm coming for blood. But I'm getting out now'" (93).

True to his word, Willie exits of the race, but not before cementing a new political reputation that anticipates a successful campaign four years later. Such a startling metamorphosis must not be taken for granted here, since, essentially, Stark passes out the night before as Cousin Willie and awakes the next morning as the Boss. In effect, Stark's bender becomes nothing short of an *awakening* not only to his naïveté as political pawn but as a rhetorical mastermind who begins to understand the ugly truths behind politics and the means to navigate them to his own ends. What changes? The striking contrast in Willie's rhetorical presentation suggests that his virginal bender empowers him with more than liquid courage, instead providing a chemical inducer that startles something primal from within. Initially, his political beliefs do not change, just the manner in which they are articulated. This shift in oratory becomes substantive enough that he is elected and that, later, his questionable ethics are easily forgiven or ignored. Stark's aggressive consumption of alcohol bridges the gap between his political beliefs (i.e., that tax reform and other measures will help to remedy the cronyism that has perpetuated societal imbalance for so long) and the expression of these beliefs. Only when he drinks does he connect with an audience, and only when he connects does he become electable.

For brevity's sake, I will not elaborate further on Stark's path toward corruption, since I am more interested in how drinking shapes the presentation of his politics, particularly as the increase in his consumption comes to parallel the audacity of his policies. Since I argue that Willie Stark is an alcoholic, it becomes necessary to examine the character and quality of his consumption. The aforementioned episode shows an obvious case where liquor hides Willie's inchoate rhetorical insecurities, allowing him to speak with abandon. Chemically freed from the

tethers of his political inexperience, Stark's oratorical verve quickly erases doubts that he is not electable. Indeed, for Stark to oppose the entrenched powers that have ruled the political landscape for so long, he needs something more than viable strategy; hence, the presentation of his political points becomes the galvanizing force that influences his fellow "hicks" to elect him. This political trademark proves enormously successful throughout the novel, as he repeatedly avoids (among other things) impeachment through slick talking and backdoor deals. And while these episodes certainly speak to Stark's insatiable appetite for control and power, they also reveal how he has become increasingly reliant on booze to facilitate, manipulate, and confront on behalf of his own political agenda.

Diagnosing Willie Stark as an alcoholic casts him as something more than a prodigious drinker, since his crooked behavior remains consistently linked to booze; Stark's being sauced often precipitates some dramatic confrontation meant to intimidate a rival. Much like his initial foray into drunkenness as a gubernatorial candidate, Stark navigates the behind-doors political landscape most effectively when he drinks, and the frequency of these occurrences suggests a chemical dependency on the bottle. Such dependence resembles that of Alcoholics Anonymous founder Bill Wilson. Robert Thomsen relates Wilson's self-articulation of his first drink: Bill "could feel his body relaxing, a stiffness going out of his shoulders as he sensed the warm glow seeping through him into all the distant, forgotten corners of his being … It was a miracle. There was no other word. A miracle that was affecting him mentally, physically, and, as he would soon learn, spiritually too … all his life he had been living in chains. Now he was free" (qtd in Kurtz 13-14). Explicit here is the correlation between the ethereal feeling provided by the buzz and the deeply embedded insecurities it alleviates. Wilson's imagery implies something fundamentally troubling for the alcoholic that becomes chemically remedied through drink. The dependence is

both chemical and social, making the alcoholic's problem a cyclical and symbiotic one—social awkwardness is remedied by drinking, one problem solved and another created. For the alcoholic like Wilson, each subsequent sip becomes the pursuit of the "elusive—and ultimately illusive—sensation of freedom" (14).

Jack never directly refers to Stark as an alcoholic though the language pertaining to his drinking colors the act as something far from benign. At Pappy Stark's farm, Jack and Willie share a few pulls: "'Gimme a slug' … He lifted up my coattail and pulled out the bottle. I could hear the gurgle as *he did the damage*" (Warren 30, emphasis mine). This encounter precedes their midnight run to Burden's Landing where Stark confronts the venerable Judge Irwin on his political endorsement of Callahan—not Stark—for Senate. The contours of this episode reveal the depths and character of Stark's social and chemical reliance on liquor in order to project power and curry political favor. On their way to Irwin's, Jack warns Stark that "'The Judge won't scare easy'" (38). The subsequent encounter proves to be an ideological battle of wills where Jack focuses considerably on Stark's consumption. When they arrive, Stark orders Jack to "'knock on the door and tell him I want to see him'" (41). Although Jack is paid to do such things, Stark's reliance on him to parlay nevertheless implies that he feels the pressure of the moment, especially after heeding Jack's warning about the Judge's steely resolve. Rather than getting straight to the point of their meeting (it is well after midnight, and Irwin has been roused from sleep), the Boss immediately seeks a warm-up cocktail before the proceedings: "'Judge, I trust you don't mind Jack pouring me a slug? You know, Southern hospitality'" (43). The first drink proves lubricant enough to loosen his tongue, and when he hears Irwin affirm his backing of Callahan, Stark immediately responds, "'I reckon I will take another spot'" before "he heaved himself in the direction of the bottle. *He did his work*, and said, 'Thanks'" (45, emphasis mine).

Much as his earlier drink did "damage," this one does "work"; each eases Stark's ability to cope and confront, like Bill W., exacting a physical toll along the way. Stark becomes increasingly loose-lipped and animated, as "the liquor sloshed out of his glass onto his Palm Beach pants" (46). When pleadings and veiled threats prove unsuccessful, "he drain[s] his glass" (47) and leaves. This encounter yields no immediate political victory, though it reveals Willie's reliance on alcohol to force political action. The problem with such a tactic—much as how Bill W. chased that ever-elusive feeling of freedom—is that its "successes" come at the expense of mental and physical damage done. The longer Stark relies on booze-fueled encounters like this to maintain power, the more successfully his enemies mobilize against him, and, not surprisingly, his tactics ultimately prove self-destructive. As Willie's liver goes, so does the state he makes in his populist image. This failed symbiosis points to another way that alcohol functions in Warren's broader political critique of Stark's administration. In order to elucidate the novel's larger preoccupation with welfare politics in the South during the pre-war years, I now consider alcohol and addiction at the level of metaphor. For this, I turn to how the concept of addiction became appropriated into a modernizing culture as something beyond an actual condition, instead touching on a symbolic manifestation of, among other things, excess, discord, malady.

Susan Zieger argues that, in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, addiction "with its incoherent subjects, chronic repetitions, wretched stupidity, and debilitating intransigence, presents its own distinct burr in the side of rational Enlightenment modernity and progress" (10). In the nineteenth-century especially, addiction came to be viewed as impeding social progress, beginning "as an exceptional story of white, masculine, middle-class making gone awry, ironically confronting its own embodiment as a mode of compulsion rather than freedom, habituation rather than spontaneity, dependency rather than autonomy, and disease

rather than health" (10). Narratives of addiction, then, introduced the idea of "freedom as sobriety" accompanied by equal parts "moderation, self-control, and autonomy" (11), adjectives hardly sufficient for Willie Stark. However, the etymological resonance of "addiction" became dulled over time, as critics and medical professionals alike voiced skepticism about the limitations of addiction (what Zieger calls the term's "promiscuity") in properly categorizing an aberrant condition of excessive physical consumption; if alcoholism was a disease, what makes it different than the "habit" of tobacco? (12). The wide-ranging interpretations of "addiction" became symbolized through metaphor—enslavement, colonization, poverty, et cetera—where the ambiguity surrounding its exact definition could be replaced by signifiers with contemporary relevance. Even today, the "ontological status" of addiction still requires metaphor for proper critical deployment, since it remains confused as "sin, vice, disease, illness, habit, compulsion, or choice" (12). Of the multiple ways that addiction is appropriated, Zieger states that,

> This perpetual rehearsal suggests that metaphor has been a durable cultural mechanism by which addiction has assumed its various forms within Anglo-American culture. Addiction's immense explanatory power derives precisely from its defiance of categorization: having colonized a rich terrain of habits, hobbies, practices, pursuits, commitments, loves, acts of ingestion, behavioral tics, idiosyncrasies, and the rest of the multifarious world of description by which humans designate their pleasurable everyday actions, it now verges on a prosaic concept of simple attachment (12-13).

Zieger's "prosaic" assignation does not, however, exempt addiction and disease from their very serious consequences for the individual addict and, at the level of metaphor, broader societal malignancies that it signifies.

Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* describes how the concept of addiction imposes itself symbolically: "Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, anomie, weakness) are identified with disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor.

Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using the metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things" (58). If Warren paints Willie Stark as socially and chemically addicted to alcohol, then this disease necessarily becomes, in Sontag's words, "awash in significance" and infects the entire body politic. Jack's aforementioned Keeley Cure allusion strongly suggests that, in a novel concerned with southern politics on the eve of World War II, Warren "could reimagine addicted subjectivity and agency in ways that both replicated and changed how the broader culture viewed addiction," (Zieger 14) thus making addiction symptomatic of a societal malady. However, the novel "views" it through Jack's own addicted consciousness, which problematizes a "broader culture" analysis. The fact remains, though, that Willie Stark casts a sizeable political shadow that cannot be divorced from the drunken way that he exercises power. Jack links Stark's increasingly questionable political action (and accumulation of power) to the amount of whiskey rotting his gut, suggesting that the state ironically becomes a space challenging the legitimacy of such radically progressive legislation despite the fact that social change is necessary. Indeed, the Boss's dictatorial (sub)version of the modern welfare state—what Sontag might include as the "deepest dread"—signifies nothing less than the dramatic disintegration of southern societal hegemony.

Historian T. Harry Williams notes that, before Huey Long's ascent into Louisiana's political consciousness, there were others who actively opposed the state's concentration of power in the upper-class. These were "demagogues [who] made much noise and won some elections, but they did not alter in any fundamental way the nature of power relationships" (16-17). Long—and for our purposes, Stark—*did* alter these relationships, and it is within this rupturing of convention that the Boss simultaneously achieves his greatest political victories while mobilizing his enemies. No doubt, the state could not stay mired in Old Guard political

purgatory forever, something Judge Irwin acknowledges to Mr. Patton during a testy exchange regarding Willie Stark. Patton, "the bluff, burley type with lots of money," says "'Why, that fellow is giving this state away. Free this and free that and free other. Every wool-hat jackass thinking the world is free. Who's going to pay? That's what I want to know?'" (Warren 124). Irwin responds moments later, "'Government is committed these days to give services we never heard of when we were growing up. The world's changing'" (124). While Patton embodies the concerns of the social elite, Irwin acknowledges the reality of the times that during the Depression, social welfare programs were common. Without someone like Stark, not only would the destitute be subject to the vicissitudes of a depressed economy but the state itself would implode due to its own social imbalance. In other words, something *had* to change.

Soon, however, Irwin and other stalwarts who might have remained open-minded to the socially equitable aspect of Stark's politics tire of the ways in which such legislation is achieved, and rightfully so, since the Boss's enforcement tows the line between acceptable and felonious. Irwin says as much to Jack, "'I can't say I approve of Stark, but I'm not like most of our friends down the Row. I can respect a man, and he's a man. I was almost for him at one time. He was breaking the windowpanes and letting in a little fresh air. But … I began to worry about him knocking down the house, too. And some of his methods'" (343). Still, what complicates the analysis of Stark—and the moral ambiguity with which Jack wrestles throughout the novel—is the fact that Stark's ideology does address the needs of the disenfranchised in a utilitarian fashion. Even during his Mason City days, he supported black labor for the schoolhouse construction (earning the moniker "nigger-lover" from the town's armchair politicians) when it clearly defied convention. As Governor, the magnitude of his charitable policies increases substantially. To the chagrin of MacMurfee, the Boss lists "The extraction tax[.] Raising the

royalty rate on state land[.] The income tax[.] The highway program[.] The Public Health Bill" (136) among his accomplishments.

Stark's well-meaning vision reaches the point where charitable intentions become obscured by power and ambition, and the symbolic distinction between his own charity and the antiquated political status quo collapses under the weight of his aggressive enforcement. Note the tone regarding his gubernatorial magnum opus, the construction of a state-run hospital: "'By God … I don't care how fine [the hospitals in the northeast] are, mine's gonna be finer … and any poor bugger in this state can go there and get the best there is and not cost him a dime'" (231). What is ostensibly meant to be a medical center to service the sick comes to embody a personal reaffirmation of power and control. While these examples support critical claims substantiating the novel as "political," Robert Brinkmeyer pushes the notion a step further by equating Stark's maneuvering as outright fascist. Contrary to previous criticism arguing that southern writers turned inward when addressing the South's moral inequities, Brinkmeyer contends that, due to the invisible threat of European Fascism, writers like Warren "were actually turned fearfully outward" in the years before and after World War II. These writers "portrayed the cultural forces shaping the South in the context of the world situation, particularly as the nation, responding to the threat of world war, embraced a nationalism and internationalism that downplayed the significance of local customs and regional allegiances" (2-3). Indeed, the outward gesture set against the backdrop if impeding war exposed "The South's system of racial segregation, together with its one-party political system, including its enforcement of widespread voting restrictions" (3).

It is not too far a stretch that Warren's representation of Stark was influenced by Fascism, as Huey Long himself was frequently described as fascist during his reign. According to

Brinkmeyer, "modernity" as it penetrates the southern literary landscape usually pertains to "the traditional South trying to hold off the Yankee invasion of dollars and capital investment" (22). "Fascism" substitutes for "Yankee dollars" here, reconfiguring how Stark's charity is viewed. Brinkmeyer alludes to the dangerous payoff of the Boss's political system: "Underlying Willie's thinking … is a 'theory of historical costs,' that abstracts the workings of social change into the double columns of an accountant's ledger: since all social change comes with costs, one merely writes the costs off against the gains" (271). It does not take an accountant to anticipate the failures of such a system, and Stark's "ruthless pragmatism … creates a *thoroughly modern state*, with the costs in terms of human life debited in the death camp's ledger" (271, emphasis mine). If Stark's welfare policies evolve the state toward the modern, and this ideology simply tallies political wins despite the cost of human life, then the notion of "progress" quickly proves troubling.[7] Here, Stark's literal consumption of alcohol operates most fully for his metaphoric consumption[8] of the (modern) state. His addiction, in the end, reveals that the kind of progress he wants to pursue simply cannot be sustained over the long term, specifically because the *only* way

[7] Steven D. Ealy blurs the line between reform and progress in the novel. Referencing British political philosopher Michael Oakeshott, Ealy states, that "the ultimate corruption of politics … is in taking the realm of politics to be the most significant realm of human life and converting everything in life into mere political material" (95). Ealy goes on to note, "Willie is clearly a reformer and a populist, but not a progressive. He favors redistribution of wealth, state provision of basic services, and his primary appeal is to the masses—not to the educated elite. According to Eldon Eisenach, progressivism was focused on urban life, and saw little or no value in traditional small farm America" (96).

[8] Susan Zieger relates the consumption of chattel slave labor by slave masters to the consumption of alcohol: "In the 1850s, the related questions of whether or not drunkards could reform themselves and whether or not slave masters could see the errors of their ways were both indexes of the possible failure of Enlightenment ideals that would come to characterize modernity as the historical repetition of error" (68). In this light, Zieger suggests that addiction "operates as a material negation of Enlightenment perfectibility" (68). People became mass consumers before they were able to become addicts (sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco). As it relates to slavery, consumption of something cultivated on the backs of slave labor meant a dual complicity in this ingestion. As this relates to Stark, his alcoholic excesses precipitate a political program of reform that is completely dependent on the consumption of the state's fiscal resources. While this is meant to bridge the gap between rich and poor and bring a measure of collective welfare to a state mired in the technology of yesteryear, it nevertheless betrays the fact that material is consumed problematically, destructively, and unsustainably. Stark's alcoholic addiction prevents him from seeing the parallels between his consumption and the state's, which, as Zieger correctly asserts, subverts progressive tenets of modernity.

he can enact social and political change is through pseudo-fascist means, which threaten not only the state but, if left unchecked, the entire South.

As Brinkmeyer states, Stark's politics have created "a thoroughly modern state" in its "ruthless pragmatism" that measures political wins without considering the ethical implications of such victories, thus complicating how his progressive programs should be understood. Stark's policies, the novel warns, preclude a dangerous descent into domestic fascism where his unmitigated power becomes something akin to dictatorship. Because his ideology empowers the class of hill people who have long been ignored, such radical political implementation is, as Judge Irwin says, "letting in a little fresh air." These acts amount to subverting long-held power structures, which, through Stark's brazen rhetorical magic initially, occurs without much resistance. However, the more Stark pushes for larger scale welfare reform (at taxpayer expense), the more resistance he encounters, and, at some point, his vision requires some measure of support from those against whom he stands. As the aforementioned confrontation with Irwin suggests, Stark can no longer rely on the vituperative powers of alcoholic courage to muscle his way through ideological barriers. As the Boss realizes the need to forge political alliances, his drinking comes to function metaphorically, suggesting that his addiction prevents the possibility that his political vision can be sustained. For Stark to ensure the state's perpetual consumption of fiscal resources to build up the coffers and enact the political reform necessary for the marginalized populace to achieve substantive social and material success, he must reach across the aisle. Such a unifying gesture, however, requires that he compromise, something his metaphorical addiction disallows from either side of the political spectrum—he will not cede power to the establishment, and the establishment increasingly resists his political manipulation.

The Stark-Irwin episode best exemplifies the narrative shift to a metaphorical representation of drinking. As mentioned earlier, Willie drinks before confronting Irwin, providing the chemical catalyst to summon the courage to state his case. What separates the conclusion of this scene from others throughout, however, is the fact that Irwin does not relent. His ideological position represents a genuine obstacle to Stark's hold on power, so Irwin's Callahan endorsement symbolizes a legitimate threat to the Boss's political ambitions. Throughout the conversation, Stark attempts to approach consensus with Irwin through drinking. Though they cannot agree on Stark as the Senate nominee, perhaps they might at least share a highball. After Willie pours himself a drink, he implores Irwin to do the same: "'Yeah … you're a gent, and so you don't ever get impatient. Not even for your likker. You aren't even impatient for your drink right now and it's likker your money paid for. But you'll get a drink, Judge. I'm asking you to have one. Have a drink with me, Judge'" (Warren 44). The symbolic value of the cocktail is clear in its allusion to this political possession of power: Irwin can afford (literally, figuratively) to be patient since his endorsement for Senate carries substantial weight. They both know that his backing remains crucial for election; thus, Irwin holds the power, symbolized in the presence of his "likker." Stark's help-myself movement toward Irwin's stash shows his fearlessness of this power, as well as a forceful possession of endorsement. Irwin's refusal to acknowledge Stark's position undercuts the symbolic force of the gesture, causing Stark's tone to shift slightly, "'Aw, have a drink'" (44). What begins as a bold act of (re)possession becomes nothing more than a shucks-y plea for an invitation to Irwin's power represented in the unshared cocktail. To share a drink is to share a viewpoint, and, for the first time since Willie's ascent to power, his ambition necessitates an untenable alliance.

Stark's literal addiction to alcohol comes to represent his metaphorical addiction to an ideological vision that meets increasing resistance as his demands on the state prove more and more stressful to the social status quo. The convergence of his two-pronged addiction reaches critical mass during the encounter with Tiny Duffy and Gummy Larson. In order for the legislative stars to align for the construction and maintenance of the state-run hospital, certain back-room political handshaking must occur. Throughout the novel, Tiny Duffy is berated by the Boss and targeted as representing his enemy factions. Harboring meager political ambition for himself, Duffy persists in vouching for Stark's rival, Gummy Larson, to build the hospital, using Larson's authority over MacMurfee as capital for the transaction. Initially, Stark agrees—begrudgingly so—but soon changes his mind when Larson and Duffy arrive at the Governor's Mansion to solidify the arrangement. Perhaps more so than any other episode in the novel, this scene shows both of Stark's addictions at work. Jack juxtaposes Stark's condition with everyone else's: "Sugar Boy wasn't a drinker … Duffy, of course, was a drinker, but he wasn't drinking that night. He obviously was not in any mood for drinking" (360). Tiny is sober because of his discomfort at standing in front of Stark, between his boss and Gummy Larson. Also,

> The discomfort was due, in part at least, to the fact that the Boss was, very definitely, drinking. For when the Boss really drank, what tender inhibitions ordinarily shackled up his tongue were absolutely removed. And now he was drinking alright. It looked like the first fine flush of a three-day blow and the barometer falling. He was cocked back on a leather couch with a pitcher of water, a bottle, and a bowl of ice on the floor beside his crumple coat and empty shoes. When the Boss really got the words, he usually was a long way down (360).

Note some of Jack's descriptors: "absolutely removed," "three-day blow," "long way down." Jack and Duffy realize that the gravity of the confrontation will increase multifold with every drink drunk by the Boss. Much like situations prior, Stark's mercurial emotional flux becomes exacerbated by booze, revealing a social and chemical dependency that has, thus far, mostly

served his political interests. Being consumed by the excesses of power is not the same as that power representing a particular ideology, however. Only when Stark drunkenly clashes with his most threatening political opposite does his metaphorical addiction manifest itself fully as a condition representing this ideological dead end.

By this point Stark's handle on power has begun to loosen significantly, and no amount of liquid courage remedies the irreparable damage to his political rivals. Again, the symbolism inherent on both sides of the drinking line is telling. No one except for Stark is drinking. Usually reliable for a cocktail or two so as to fall in line with the Boss, Duffy remains dry. Most notable in the contrast between drunk and sober, though, is Larson: "He did not drink. He had once been a gambling-house operator and had found that it did not pay to drink. Gummy was strictly business and he didn't do anything unless it paid" (360). Where Stark requires liquor to do business, Larson requires absolute temperance, and this contrast provides more than juxtaposition in character. Stark's behavior makes little business sense—rather than accept the most logical bid, he would rather reject it out of the principle that his political rival not benefit. To relinquish control to Larson would be to undo the political reconfiguring that Stark has so carefully facilitated. True, the hospital would be built either way, but Larson and the state's stodgy political players would benefit. The result would be the same, but the means would change, compromising Brinkmeyer's idea the Stark's movement toward a "modern state" is fueled by ruthless pragmatism only. When the Boss is properly intoxicated, such pragmatism becomes compromised by personal vendettas and professional insecurities, the very ones which his copious imbibing has thus far obfuscated.

Stark's fascist propensity continues to depend on his emotive (drunken) rhetoric for the proper balance of support from the populace and threats to his enemies. His metaphorical

alcoholism fails him in that he can no longer separate emotion from necessity, as pragmatism gives way to name-calling. Stark's fascism, then, becomes decidedly anti-modern in its drunken remitting of the socio-economic forces (i.e., the material gain from finance capitalism) that serve both individual self-interest (Larson and Duffy would benefit from the contract) and the long-term needs of the welfare state. In Stark's world, politics *always* trumps economics, and this model proves unsustainable either to his own ambition or as a model to encourage growth and progress for the state. Here, Stark's drunken negotiations represent the senselessness of his entire ideological schema, while Larson's stoic indifference projects the callous rationale of an unexcitable businessman. Even Jack's presentation of the scene points to the metaphorical gap between the two men. After Willie finishes berating Gummy as Judas Iscariot, "He *relapsed* into silence, glowered across at Gummy, then reached down for the bottle. He poured a lot into the glass, and sloshed in some water. He wasn't bothering with ice now. *He was nearly down to the essentials.* Before long the water would go" (361-362, emphases mine). Gummy, "from the vast distance of sobriety and victory" (362) remains unaffected, since, as Jack narrates, "He had *ice water* in his veins" (363, emphasis mine). Stark's political negotiations have been reduced to the hysterics exhibited in his throwing the drink in Tiny's face; if he is forced to relinquish control of his vision, then he reacts belligerently, so much so that his opponent becomes further empowered. That Larson is not awarded the contract proves insignificant in the long run, since Willie's addictions have eroded any confidence in his agenda. Indeed, Stark becomes the South's fascist demagogue, one whose ideas once held promise, but the implementation of which cannot survive his alcoholic addiction.

Willie Stark's drinking can be characterized as alcoholic because it is required to facilitate specific action. The transition from Cousin Willie of the hills to the Boss of the people

occurs only after an alcoholic episode which awakens the confrontational monster from within. Alcohol becomes a crutch for Stark as he maneuvers his way into office and, once there, bullies his rivals into submitting to his political will. Initially, this rise proves to be a spectacular subversion of power, a radical modern equivalent to Jesus overturning the money tables in the Temple. The Boss's aggressive repudiation of the state's ideological stronghold inverts existing power structures which had historically served the elite at the expense of the majority populace. Informing Stark's politics is the populist will of the people, where, in moves meant to help bridge social and economic disparity, the Boss sets out to modernize the state through reforms that take from the wealthy and give to the poor. While the state becomes modernized—infrastructure is updated, tax reform implemented, and a state-run hospital built—this paradigm shift costs the Governor long term political capital. As Stark more copiously feeds his alcoholism to mitigate the impending ascent of his opposition, drinking becomes something more than a literal addiction, functioning instead as a metaphor for the infeasibility of such radical populist reform in a South with such deeply rooted inequality. The further he pushes his progressive populist agenda, the less faith in these measures he engenders. In the end, his addictive consumption of alcohol parallels the metaphorical addiction to a particular brand of political power that initially seeks the ends through whatever means necessary. Although many of these measures "let in a little air," they eventually prove insufficient as Stark's alcoholism erodes the once-justifiable ends themselves.

As much as Willie Stark's rise and fall comprises a majority of the novel's temporal action, *All the King's Men* is undoubtedly the story of Jack Burden. Warren critic James Justus concurs: "Though the progress from Cousin Willie to Governor Stark may be the tale told in the book, it is Burden's revelation of that progress that is the experience of the book" (194). Deeply

introspective, Jack combines his personal and philosophical histories to ascertain some measure of distinction between truths and facts. Initially unsuccessful—the most glaring account of this failure in connection occurs in the Cass Mastern episode where Jack "tried to discover the truth and not the facts. Then, when the truth was not to be discovered … I could not bear to live with the cold-eyed reproach of the facts" (Warren 157)—Burden uses the course of his narration to bridge this truth-fact gap, thus "mov[ing] toward historical connection" (Cullick 102). In doing so, Jack becomes "redeemed from the burden of the past through the act of confession" (100). It is precisely the confessional quality of the narrative that assumes great importance in understanding the nature of Jack's redemption. Jack finds historical clarity only after he reconciles his role in the deaths of those to whom he was close, and to achieve such catharsis necessitates that he confront his addiction to alcohol. When Jack acknowledges early on that this is the story of Willie Stark and Jack Burden, he does more than merely link the two as partners in crime, instead pointing to how Stark's literal and metaphorical addictions consume him, while Jack's consumption becomes something—the most *important* thing—he overcomes so as to confront "the awful responsibility of Time." Jack's addiction functions as an extended metaphor for personal and regional recovery, suggesting that there might indeed be an ideological middle-ground for the South as it moves forward. Only when Jack feels that he is sufficiently recovered can he properly articulate his place in a complicated history that he has long avoided. For Jack to forgive himself in Stark's recklessness and the consequences following, he must forgive himself for being an alcoholic.

Jack's addiction feeds on the anxieties stemming from mistakes made in the past. This addiction, I argue, is quintessentially modern in its understanding of how the present and future are somehow "paid for by blood" (Warren 429). How, Jack asks, can a violent past somehow

lead to a stable future, particularly when the present is complicated by ideological polarity that threatens the fates of everyone? Jack's concerns resonate loudest when considering the implications of his personal crisis with history as bearing profoundly on how the Stark narrative unfolds. Susan Zieger conceives of the relationship between material addiction and "the modern" similarly to Jack: "If, as Roland Barthes has evocatively suggested, 'Sugar is a time, a category of the world,' then so are coffee, chocolate, alcohol, opium, morphine, and all other addictive substances—not because they have the pharmacological effect of altering subjective perceptions of time but because they mark time through repetition, *disconnecting their users from the flow of history*" (16, emphasis mine). Jack's disconnected relation to history—one that is problematized through the clouded lens of his former drunken self—serves as the impetus for this entire confession. Jack's metaphorical alcoholism (and subsequent recovery) comments on the fear stemming from conceptualizing his disconnected place in history amid the impending fascist crisis in Europe, and his addiction and recovery implicate the very survival of the modern human. These stakes recall Ian Baucom's definition of addiction as being "'an unsettled and unsettling way of inhabiting and experiencing the modern'" (qtd in Zieger 16). Jack's position as having "'the knowledge of a reader who has lived through what it anticipates'" (qtd in Justus 205) ties the confessional metaphor of sobriety to his confrontation with the swirling political chaos of the modern world.

Before turning to the specifics of Jack's drinking, it is necessary to identify the formal qualities of his narrative in order to conclude how it characterizes the specifics of his recovery. Throughout the nineteenth century, national temperance was a heated topic of debate, particularly among those who conceived of America's consumption habits as pandemic in scale. Activists began calling for individual temperance as a solution to domestic discord that had

plagued families whose general well-being was threatened by excessive drinking (the drunkard was almost always the working man/father/husband). This groundswell eventually formed what has been more broadly known as the Temperance Movement, which, much later on, became the driving social, moral, and political force responsible for Prohibition. Groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) were dedicated to reforming drinkers and promoting temperance. Preceding the WCTU by three decades or so was the Washington Society, a secular group of men committed to sobriety. Paramount to the sober successes of the Washingtonians was the idea of confession, an individual act by the reforming drinker meant to acknowledge past transgressions and take full responsibility for them in a step necessary for long term recovery. John W. Crowley defines the temperance narrative as "a first-person account of a drunkard's damnation and salvation," which "tend to show 'before' in much greater detail than 'after'" since "drunkenness is simply more dramatic than sobriety" (ix-x). These narratives became a genre unto themselves.

While many temperance narratives dominated popular literature in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, the genre itself was mostly forgotten as something with the original intent to aid in recovery. Granted, novels like *Ten Nights in a Bar-room* (1854) fictionalized the horrors of drunkenness as a means to promote temperance, but these measures approached the solution to problem drinking in a scare-them-straight fashion. The Washingtonian aspect of confession and therapeutic fellowship had all but disappeared until Bill W. happened upon some temperance literature. Here, "the embers of the Washingtonian spirit were rekindled by Alcoholics Anonymous," and "[Bill W.] was 'startled, then sobered' to learn of the astonishing parallels between A.A. … and the Washingtonian movement" (17). Matthew J. Raphael also locates the chronological precedent to A.A. in the Washingtonians: "Although A.A. may not have derived

directly from the Washington Society, it became one in spirit with this institutional forebear by reviving the *temperance narrative* and refashioning it into the *recovery narrative*, a genre just as essential to A.A.s as its generic predecessor had been to the Washingtonians" (70). Indeed, the line of continuity between the two organizations connects the centrality of narrative to their philosophies of recovery (18).

For our initial purposes, it is important not to categorize Jack too rigidly into either the temperance or recovery narrative paradigm in his telling of the story, since, from the beginning, Jack's narrative technique eschews many of the stylistic qualities that have come to characterize them. I argue that Jack's narration continuously works toward personal and regional (literal and metaphorical) recovery, which perhaps unfairly associates it too closely with A.A.-specific models. To elaborate, A.A. meetings often begin with a recitation of the Big Book's fifth chapter, "How it Works": "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now" (*Alcoholics Anonymous* 58). This past-present dichotomy seems to follow Jack's narrative trajectory. However, note how Raphael describes the "What We Used to Be Like" section of the Big Book (meant to be the most colorful and dramatic portion of the book, detailing the horrors of drunkenness): "But dwelling too long on one's 'drunkalog' is thought to suggest a lack of true sobriety; the battle of the bottle, however sensational in the retelling, lies in the past; the present focus should be attaining a purposefully *un*dramatic life without booze. Therefore those more advanced in A.A., whose bad old days are increasingly behind them, tend to foreshorten their narratives" (17). If Jack's struggle with alcohol stems partly from a deeply strained relationship with the past, then a glib sidestepping of this past as a means to demonstrate a sober focus on the present becomes conceptually problematic. For Jack to become sober, nothing short of an expansive re-examination of his (drunken) past will suffice.

Does the narrative dwelling on the exploits of the past preclude him from literal sobriety in the present? I argue that it does not, precisely because of the metaphorical addiction that Warren uses to frame the novel's southern social and political focus. Jack's recovery narrative[9] conflates, separates, reinvents, and evolves beyond either temperance or recovery confessions explicitly, accounting more fully and appropriately for the ways in which literal sobriety becomes necessary for him to be able to confront the modern world from an ideological perspective resting somewhere between Stark and Irwin.

Early on, Jack's drinking cleaves to his social upbringing in both quantity and quality. Jack recalls a scene from his youth when Anne Stanton's friends and family gathered to see her off to school, while "Governor Stanton sat in the living room and had another drink by himself and looked over the evening paper" (Warren 298). Imbued in a culture where drinking occupies social centrality, Jack consumes accordingly as he moves through his adolescence into young adulthood. When he and his two fellow graduate school roommates—"one industrious, stupid, unlucky, and alcoholic and the other idle, intelligent, lucky, and alcoholic" (157)—were paid, they all have "a wonderful blowout" (159). After his failed attempt at writing his History dissertation, Jack takes a job as a newspaper reporter where he first meets Cousin Willie Stark of Mason City. Chronicling Stark's doomed gubernatorial campaign, Jack drinks steadily, contrasting strongly with Stark, who remains a teetotaler at the time: "[Stark] would sit for a spell, while I drank off my nightcap," which would require "having a cup of coffee [the next morning] to steady my nerves" (72, 73). Stark's first drinking binge shows how Jack himself

[9] Jack might actually be restraining himself from further dramatizing his past drinking, which further justifies the Great Sleep and the Great Twitch as metaphorical stand-ins for his alcoholism. Recall the aforementioned statement from Matthew J. Raphael regarding "What We Used to Be Like" in A.A.: "But dwelling too long on one's 'drunkalog' is thought to suggest a lack of true sobriety" (17) for the admitted alcoholic. Perhaps Jack restrains himself from an overly dramatized version of his own "drunkalog," instead focusing the gritty details on Stark. Jack can hardly be called an unreliable narrator, but the lack of attention paid to his problem drinking (and, conversely, the amount of it to Willie's) implies that his sobriety is legitimate.

consumes, marking his own consumption with a severity departing from the social aspect of his upper-class indoctrination into the culture of aristocratic drinking. Jack's diagnosis of Stark's hangover assigns a particular value to booze which casts it as something simultaneously good and bad. Note Jack's choice of words: "'You are dehydrated,' I said. 'The result of alcohol taken in excess. *But that is the only way to take it.* It is the only way to do a man any good'" (86, emphasis mine). Alcohol guzzled in excess produces a hangover, yet, according to Jack's barroom wisdom, the only way to drink is to excess. Thus, hangovers become a regular part of existence for the drinker. This resignation to the inevitable excesses in Jack's drinking alludes to the problematic relationship Jack has with alcohol, and his self-awareness of this bind casts his consumption with a pall of desperation hinting at a much deeper malaise working within.

By consuming in excess, Jack abuses the class privilege affording him the social luxury to drink at any whim. In other words, Jack imbibes at greater personal risk than does Governor Stanton, since he consumes outside of the realm of Burden's Landing. The idea of a scotch highball by the fireplace, leather-bound book in hand, persists only within the realm of a privileged social space where the rules of propriety encourage such consumption as a signifier of material prosperity. Outside of these confines, Jack's drinking becomes, in a sense, unprotected, susceptible to the dangers of alcoholic excess. His consumption varies dramatically depending on his location relative to the social class divide, which pinpoints the ideological chasm he feels between himself and the figures from his past. The night of the Stark-Irwin confrontation serves as an important instance of how Jack's unease with the particularities of the situation alters his drinking habits considerably. Earlier that day, he and Willie share several pulls from Jack's pint. Just as the narrative describes Willie doing "the damage" as he drinks, Jack's also paints his own imbibing in destructive terms: "I leaned on the fence and waited for the sunset colorations to

explode in my stomach, which they did" (30, emphasis mine). This exchange does not precipitate any dramatic binge (as is often the case with Stark), instead serving as another nondescript moment during the day when Jack appeases his urge. Here, Jack is as blasé about the shared drink as he is, say, describing the color of his suit or the daytime temperature; the significance of alcohol to the scene's mood is minimal.

However, once Jack, Willie, and Sugar Boy leave Pappy's for a late night rendezvous with Irwin, the stakes increase substantially. Once there, Willie immediately begins drinking. Strangely—inside Irwin's house, a space exemplifying the social drinking Jack recalls from his privileged past—Jack does not. Stark hands Jack a highball, though "I can't say that I took the drink. It got shoved into my hand and I stood there holding it, not drinking it" (44). Why the reluctance? As the scene unfolds, Stark and Irwin act as ideological opposites, men whose class upbringing informs their politics. Stark's invasion of Irwin's liquor cabinet amounts to a crossing of the invisible class barriers that have figuratively separated the two sides of the social divide. If Irwin's hospitality would normally produce a drink for his (unexpected) guest, then his refusal to engage in a social cocktail with Willie reveals the extent to which the social protocol has been violated. Acting as a representative for Stark, yet having grown up in the very sitting room in which the scene takes place (at this point, Jack has not yet discovered that Irwin is his biological father), Jack remains at odds with both sides, harboring criticisms of each. This inner conflict expresses itself in Jack's figurative location to the untasted drink he holds. As they leave, Stark "drained his glass" while Irwin orders them to "'Get out.'" Unable to abide by either side of the class and ideological divides, Jack "set my glass on the shelf of the bookcase behind me. I discovered that I hadn't touched it, not since the first sip. *Well, to hell with it*, I thought, and let it stand" (47). By leaving the untouched cocktail Jack pledges neutrality, avoiding ideological

alignment with either man. Jack's focus on the significance of the cocktail to the overall dynamic signals his broader, metaphorical move toward the sobriety requisite for his forging a new identity that favors neither Stark nor Irwin.

Even though Jack's consumption wavers in Irwin's presence, he still drinks problematically at this point. When Jack is charged by the Boss to "dig it up" on Irwin, he begins his second journey into the past in search of truth: "I took the first step the next afternoon while I sat in a beer parlor in the city, surrounded by a barricade of empty beer bottles" (193). It is only after he discovers the nefarious dealings in Irwin's past and Anne Stanton's affair with Willie Stark that Jack sets out on the most significant, sobering journey in the novel. The shock over Anne's sexual dalliances with Stark catalyzes Jack's trip West, and it is on this journey where he fully conceptualizes how his past has paralyzed any healthy embracing of the present or hope for the future. Jack focuses on the two failed relationships in his life (his brief marriage to Lois and, more significantly, his love for Anne) as the lenses through which to comprehend and define his ambiguous connection to the modern world. Here, Jack actually conceives of the fallout from these two women metaphorically—the Great Sleep (Lois) and the Great Twitch (Anne)—which, in turn, recasts his alcoholism in terms anticipating hope for personal and existential redemption through recovery. Indeed, Jack's transcontinental journey encompasses much more than the time and space to clear his head, instead serving as the spiritual regeneration used to ensure the sobriety necessary for his survival.

Free from the pressures at home, Jack uses the time spent on the road to consider the events (and his place in them) that causes his two worlds to collide. I argue that the trip serves its

most useful function through the geographic[10] and figurative separations from the chaos of the Stark-Stanton drama. Jack's trip West operates as the lynchpin in the alcoholic narrative, since this spatial separation allows him the time and distance to effectively dry out. In A.A. lore, this "geographic cure"—the clean-slate approach to sobriety where one displaces oneself away from the environment where alcoholic consumption occurs—remains a falsity, as spatial relocation merely provides a temporary distraction from the stimuli that trigger drinking. For Jack, though, the geographic cure actually works, complicating a strict A.A.-modeled form to his recovery. This section of the novel emphasizes Jack's displacement as essential to his sobriety. Not only does geography help to cure Jack but the specificity of "the West" also serves to distinguish how this new location is fundamentally different from the South he leaves behind. Warren's language of geography and space distinguishes between the South and the rest of the nation (West): the West is where you go when you need clarity from a tumultuous South where such clarity proves elusive, impossible even. To be sure, the West "is just where [Jack] went" for one final introspective bender before he dries out. Finally, with a sober mind free from the cobwebs of alcoholic excess, Jack himself produces the metaphors that apply to the symbolic drunken blackout that has long prevented him from meaningful interaction with the modern world.

Jack's stay at the Long Beach hotel is short-lived and uneventful; during the thirty-six hour stay, all but forty minutes are spent in his room:

> I had had a puncture in the morning and so didn't hit Long Beach till about evening. I drank a milk shake, bought a bottle of bourbon, and went up to my room. I hadn't had a drop the whole trip. I hadn't wanted anything … But now I knew that if I didn't drink that bourbon, as soon as I shut my eyes to go to sleep the whole hot and heaving continent would begin charging at me out of the dark. So I took some, took a bath, and then lay on the bed, with my light off, watching

[10] In her memoirs, Lois Wilson (Bill Wilson's wife) recounts a time when she and Bill sought such a remedy for his increasing consumption. While the geographic relocation temporarily curbed the drinking, it did not last (Raphael 41).

> the neon sign across the street flare on and off to the time of my heartbeat, and drinking out of the bottle, which, between times, I set on the floor by my bed (271).

Jack's self-realization that, if he lay in bed sober, the "whole hot and heaving continent would begin charging me out of the dark" shows not only a chemical dependence on booze (he needs it to sleep) but a psychological one as well. Bourbon self-medicates, acting as the perfect buffer between the pain Jack feels over Anne's affair and the implications of it, and this quick bender protects Jack from *everything* that the heaving continent might throw his way. This final binge does its trick, as "I got a good sleep out of it" (271). Possessing a clear mind primed to confront the truth, Jack sets out for home, freed from the alcoholic shackles that have prevented him from engaging with his past: "I was headed back and was no longer remembering the things which I had remembered coming out" (271). Consider the implications of this introspection: Burden's trip consists of two long drives interrupted by little more than two quarantined days in a hotel room, yet he emerges reborn and able to assume responsibility for a situation he helped create. Figuratively speaking, the bourbon episode serves as the perfect example of how alcoholics conceive of their problem—understanding sobriety as a culmination of a much longer journey yields the greatest return.[11] For Jack, the journey back can only begin after he stops drinking, since the dig into his own consciousness has long been hindered precisely by booze that either numbs him to the realities of a painful modern world or disallows the philosophical insight required to ascertain the truths from the facts of his past. Is the past a fixed collage of facts from which one gleans no larger truth, or can it be something malleable, able—through a concentrated examination of one's regrets—to re-inscribe itself onto the present to convey a more universal meaning? For too long Jack consumes both to sleep and to avoid. Sober in mind, Jack looks into

[11] Jack's alcoholic narrative emphasizes the journey—as opposed to the end—which produces the metaphors to express the significance of his evolution from drunk to sober.

his past to understand how he may have been complicit in the events that have determined the shape of his existence.

Struggling to find his way after graduating from college and dissolving his relationship with Anne, Jack marries Lois Seager whose disposition, in many ways, exacerbates Jack's anxieties about the modern world. Jack admits, "I didn't really care, I suppose, so long as nothing happened to make me have to face the fact [that the marriage was loveless]" (303). The union was perfect for Jack, since "nothing ever happened" (303). Jack and Lois live in a "very slick modernistic apartment,"[12] the façade of which symbolically projects the emotional vacuity of the marriage and the company the Burdens keep. Jack is particularly disgusted with Lois's friends whom he sees as disingenuous: "There were some who had what Lois … regarded as 'position' but who didn't have much money and liked Lois's free likker. There were some who didn't have any 'position' but who had more money than Lois and knew which fork to use. And there were some who didn't have much of either position or money, but who had some credit at the better clothing stores" (305). Despite the lack of connection between husband and wife, Lois continuously remarks on how well-adjusted they are. Not surprisingly, Jack drinks to cope with his unhappiness: "After a couple of drinks and a late lunch in a speakeasy, then a couple more drinks and a game of billiards at the press club, I might call one of my friends. Then at dinner, if I managed to get home to dinner, and in the evening I would study Lois with a clinical detachment, and a sense of mystic regeneration" (306). Afternoon beer buzzes culminate in what Jack identifies as the "final phase [of my withdrawal], the phase of the Great Sleep" where "after dinner each evening, I went to bed and slept soundly … until the last possible moment the next morning" (306-307). Before long, Jack "did not even wait for dinner" to sleep, but "would come

[12] Faulkner describes Temple and Gowan's living quarters similarly in *Requiem for a Nun.*

in from my afternoon's occupation and draw the shade in the bedroom and go to bed" (307). The Great Sleep must be understood for what it is: a drunken blackout symbolizing an unhappy union and Jack's worsening alcoholism as a result of it. It is no accident that Jack couches their marital distress in symbolic terms, suggesting an alcoholic remedy to domestic despair. The Great Sleep might better be understood as the Great Passing Out, an alcohol-induced haze produced by the anxiety Jack feels in being forced to assimilate with the material markers of "success." That the Great Sleep occurs after these habitual afternoon benders, reveals how his problematic consumption has caused his withdrawal from meaningful human relationships. Anticipating the grander metaphor of recovery, Jack concludes this vignette—"Good-bye, Lois, and I forgive you for everything I did to you" (308)—by forgiving himself as well, something paramount to recovery for the alcoholic.[13] Also implicit in the metaphor, though, is the awakening forthcoming, and this homeward journey produces the other metaphor that, unlike the Great Sleep, anticipates Jack's recovery.

While the Great Sleep suffices as a metaphor for Lois, it fails to address the state of Jack's feelings for Anne. Jack relinquishes the possibility for easy closure with Anne, due to his inability to articulate the forces which prevented him from consummating their relationship years prior. In hindsight, fearing these unforeseen consequences touches on the paralysis he feels regarding how failures in the past prevent success in the present: "we can keep the past only by having the future, for they are forever tied together" (310-311). Indeed, Jack can finally let go—

[13] The Twelve Steps bring the alcoholic to realize how the disease has affected others and how to rely on the concept of God to help in the recovery process. Jack's "forgiving" Lois calls to mind Step Eight—"*Made a list of persons we had harmed, and became willing to made amends to them all.*" This aside into his marriage to Lois produces the Great Sleep where Jack seems to blame Lois as much as he does himself. However, the metaphor suffices as his self-indictment, since he clearly understands his Great Sleep to be a result of/symbolic of his excessive drinking. Only when he properly lays to rest the surfacing anxieties about Lois can he address the more pressing source of his existential predicament: Anne. On a biographical note, Lois's unfortunate tenure as Mrs. Jack Burden recalls how Ernest Kurtz characterizes Lois Wilson as Bill's "long-suffering" wife who patiently adjusted to her husband's newfound sobriety despite how it negatively affected her (25).

forgive himself—only when he remains mindful of a future. This revelation unshackles Jack from the burdens he carries, effectively freeing him for meaningful engagement with the present and future. The metaphor he invokes is the Great Twitch, something critic Newton Stallknecht describes as "the nervous system responding to pressure, and occasionally, although paradoxically, a detached consciousness that recognizes the Great Twitch for what it is, hence the great nausea, or at best a desperate resignation" (126). If, as Jack himself says, "life is but the dark heave of blood and the twitch of the nerve" (Warren 311), then the past events which have long handicapped Jack's forward movement become void of essential meaning. While this "desperate resignation" might not provide total closure (since he cannot help but see his failure to act as somehow related to Anne's current state), it nonetheless turns Jack's gaze forward.

Building on the idea that *All the King's Men* is mindful of the fascism dominating Europe at this time, Robert Brinkmeyer sees higher stakes in the Great Twitch metaphor. Because the Great Twitch "reduces all human activity to the workings of microbiology," it gestures to the "thinking used by Nazis to dehumanize Jews and others deemed misfits and enemies and finally to justify their extermination" (273). However, Jack's metaphorical attribution of everything to microbiology, in a sense, exempts him from the fascist notion of "the worship of an idealized past" (22). Rather than produce systematic dehumanization, Jack's acknowledgement of the Great Twitch allows him to contextualize past transgressions for what they are: unchangeable events that do *not* have to bear profoundly on his ability to live productively in the present and anticipate the future. While Brinkmeyer's fascist reading of the Twitch certainly speaks to the historical moment informing Warren's fictive worldview (not to mention the fascist inertia pushing Stark to self-destruction), it shortchanges the possibility that Jack's nihilistic self-awakening yields something positive for his literal and figurative survivals at this point in the

story. Jack's use of the Great Twitch to re-conceptualize his problematic relation to the past calls to mind another way in which A.A. recovery jargon informs his continual narrative progress toward sobriety. Step Three of the 12-Steps reads: We alcoholics "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*" (*A.A.* 59). Lacking the willpower to overcome addiction on one's own, the alcoholic must rely on a "Higher Power" as "a means of gaining true independence of the spirit" (*Twelve Steps* 36). In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1952), the articulation of Step Three ends with the following prayer, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done" (41). Commonly known as the Serenity Prayer—penned by twentieth-century theologian Reinhold Niebuhr[14]—this call to God was appropriated by A.A. as a means for the alcoholic to move beyond the past transgressions about which one feels pain, guilt, and regret. While Jack consistently hesitates to acknowledge such a Higher Power (much of the friction between him and the Scholarly Attorney stems from his adoptive father's fundamentalist views on God about which Jack mockingly disagrees), his conceiving of the Great Twitch metaphor nonetheless implies a reliance on something else to facilitate a forward turn of his gaze. Far from encouraging the catastrophic indifference that

[14] In his work *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), Niebuhr argues that moral individuals lose the capacity for such morality when in a group setting. He rails against social scientists and the reductive means by which they confront social ills, advocating instead for some use of force to confront societal inequity (though what works for individuals cannot be applied to groups). Coercion enacts change, not moral or rational factors, and the "tragedy of the human spirit" is that man's individual moral conscience is absent in groups (social, racial, economic, et cetera). "Wherever religion concerns itself with the problems of society, it always gives birth to some kind of millennial hope, from the perspective of which present social realities are convicted of inadequacy, and courage is maintained to continue in the effect to redeem society and injustice" (61). Religion functions as a mixed bag in Niebuhr's analysis: it preserves the "ultra-rational" hopes that make a just society possible, though its full force is felt in the individual, which—he says—does not translate to a collective will. I include these notes to suggest that A.A.'s use of the Serenity Prayer perhaps resonates beyond the content of the prayer itself, instead pointing to Niebuhr's faith in individual morality. As individuals possess morality, so, too, can they achieve sobriety. However, this model meets some resistance, since A.A. relies heavily on the group component to individual recovery (Niebuhr might agree that a group can help an individual, just not that the group itself could be recovered *as* a collective). I address criticisms of A.A.—including many who chastise the group's lack of social awareness and emphasis individual self-centeredness—in this chapter's conclusion.

propagated fascism, as Brinkmeyer argues, the Great Twitch actually provides Jack the means to encounter the world unburdened by a past that, to this point, prevented the possibility that he face it with a sober mind.

Even though Jack is no longer beholden to the sins of his past, part of his rehabilitation requires an honest acknowledgment of how former events have indirectly shaped the contours of his existence as someone fundamentally at odds with the situation of the modern world. When he returns from California, there remains important business to address, not the least of which is presenting Judge Irwin with the unflattering details unearthed in the Case of the Upright Judge. With his trip behind him, he notes that "I was on Adam's doorstep, with a single cup of java sloshing about in my insides and a fresh razor cut on my chin and sleep like sand under my eyelids" (Warren 326). Clean shaven, well-slept, and properly caffeinated, the Jack Burden who returns from the West is a sober man. With a newly sober mind and a conscience free of guilt, Jack must confront Irwin with the reality that his societal high standing came at the cost of a life he helped extinguish many years ago. This encounter at Burden's Landing, unlike the previous one with a drunken Stark in tow, reveals how drinking relates directly to class[15] as a signifier of socialite consumption and how Jack's complete sobriety ultimately renounces both sides of the social-political spectrum whose polarizing ideologies do not fit his newfound sensibility. When Jack arrives at Irwin's house, he is greeted enthusiastically: "'[L]ook at me forgetting hospitality. I bet you are dry as Andy Jackson's powder. Little early in the day perhaps for the real thing, but a touch of gin and tonic never hurt anybody. Not you and me anyway. We're indestructible, aren't we, you and me?'" (Warren 342). Note the conflation of ritual with position: being that they are fundamentally "indestructible," Irwin shows the expected hospitality to someone else

[15] The social value of drinking in this privileged space recalls the "talk, tinkle, talk" melody heard on the sun porch of Walker Percy's uncle. The ritual consumption here is particular to persons of high social class.

from the Landing, even if it is a "little early in the day" (also, recall how Irwin shows no such welcoming gesture to Stark in the earlier episode). Jack's refusal prompts "the faintest shade of disappointment on [Irwin's] face" before, not really believing that Jack's answer is genuine, he continues, "'Aw, come on, and have a little one'" (342). Like Stark in the previous episode, Irwin feels the offending sting of the denied fellowship through drink, though, unlike Stark, he falls in line with Jack: "'I'm not going to drink by myself. I'll get my stimulation out of your conversation'" (342). Because Jack remains dry, he establishes the figurative distance necessary to bear the bad news to someone with whom he has a deeply vested personal relationship. Jack hesitates for a moment: "I didn't want it to be true. And I had the sudden thought that I might have his drink of gin and tonic, and talk with him and never tell him" (342). For Jack to "have his drink of gin and tonic" requires that he bury the incriminating information, effectively reinforcing the social link that has tethered him to Irwin and folk from the Landing since birth. It is no coincidence that he references having the drink as the barrier he dares not cross, since to share the drink would be to relapse into a state of drunkenness and thrust Jack back into the swirl of ideological chaos that sobriety now allows him to resist.

Now fully able to deduce the truth from the facts of the past, Jack reveals how Irwin willingly participated in the destruction of Mortimer Littlepaugh for professional gain. As difficult as it is for Jack to announce this discovery (surely he could not have anticipated that this would precipitate Irwin's suicide), it is essential that he do so, since, regardless of the history (and blood) he shares with Irwin, the Judge's actions all those years ago represent one side of the social-political spectrum that the novel interrogates. Because Jack remains stuck between two competing ideologies, his action in confronting them becomes crucial to the idea of recovery as a broader signifier of his ontological success. By unmasking Irwin's façade of integrity, Jack

legitimizes his choice to forsake the magnetic pull that the comforts of this lifestyle encourage. Jack may not be a judge, doctor, or political player, but at least his conscience remains intact, as, through sobriety, he effectively refashions himself: "Yet the definition we have made of ourselves is ourselves. To break out of it, we must make a new self. But how can the self make a new self when the selfness which it is, is the only substance from which the new self can be made?" (351). Despite everything contributing to his social high-standing and a successful career, Irwin cannot escape the person he, in essence, *chose* to be when he compromised ethics for upward mobility. By contrast, Jack's answers his own question through his sobriety and the emotional distance he keeps between past and present, since alcohol no longer holds possession of his body and mind. As a man recovered who tells the story in hindsight, Jack knows that he avoids annihilation, in part, because sobriety eases the anxiety that, thus far, has prevented him from moving forward.

After Irwin commits suicide and it is revealed that he is Jack's biological father, Jack distances himself from Stark, immersing himself in reforming the tax code (perhaps the furthest political matter from the drama surrounding the Boss's run for Senate and the construction of the hospital, and, coincidentally the plank in Stark's political platform that Jack—many years prior—chastised when then-candidate Stark tried to "improve the minds" of onlookers by "educating" them regarding the state's fiscal imbalance). As the novel reaches its dramatic climax—Tom Stark's paralysis, Willie Stark's assassination by Adam Stanton, Duffy's ascension to Governor—Jack's sobriety becomes fully realized as *the* distinguishing factor to his survival. Jack's metaphorical use of the Keeley Cure reveals how he conceives of his recovery from addiction as something that "had passed out of me." To repeat, he states, "every time you catch a whiff of likker to even think of it, your stomach turns upside down. Somebody must have

slipped the stuff into my good times, for now I just didn't want any more good time" (370). Indeed, Jack now possesses a physiological aversion to "good times," something best articulated through a reference to the Keeley Cure. No doubt, Jack's decision to resist participating in Stark's drama results from his move away from the bottle—it is hard to imagine the pre-Twitch Jack Burden avoiding such drama, let alone being repelled from it by some physiological force. Jack continues using the metaphoric language of recovery to describe his state of mind as well as the dramatic situation in which he finds himself reluctantly engaged. Adam Stanton is nowhere to be found, and Jack worries about his friend's state of mind after learning of the liaisons between Stark and Anne. Jack is contemplative: "I thought of the bars. For it is a tradition that a man, when he has received a great shock, heads for the bar, puts his foot on the rail, orders five straight whiskies in a row, downs them one after another while he stares with uncomprehending eyes at the white, tortured face in the mirror opposite him, and then engages the bartender in a sardonic conversation about Life" (392). Clean and sober as Jack's mind might now be, he cannot stop the oncoming destruction which, by this point, seems inevitable.

Jack's alcoholic narrative of confession conflates qualities from at least three distinct schools of treatment for addiction—the Washington Society, the Keeley Cure, and Alcoholics Anonymous—and while each particular allusion vouches for primacy in Jack's newfound sobriety, the nature and quality of his recovery actually contains elements from all. Because the social, cultural, and historical contexts that Warren uses are fraught with anxiety about much larger threats to existence, the makeup of Jack's sobriety necessarily relies on an amalgamation of many models of treatment. Amid Jack's personal and philosophical confusion, one cure-all for literal and metaphorical addiction simply will not suffice. Just as I will show how Jack's figurative rebirth at novel's end depends on his finding meaningful middle-ground between two

problematic ideologies vying for power in the South at this time, his recovery must also maneuver between various methods of treatment to show how Jack's model for sobriety understands—anticipates even—the possibility that many pitfalls lie ahead. To be sure, metaphorical sobriety can only *prepare* him for what frights the modern world might bring; it cannot prevent them from happening. Jack's brand of sobriety—understood through the Sleep and the Twitch—accounts for the lack of agency he ultimately possesses. However much this resignation precludes any sort of control over his individual fate, it does allow for the figurative split from the fixity of a past over which he has obsessed for too long. Unlike Cass Mastern, (whose demise resulted in part from an obsession over how his actions bore profoundly on the war, slavery, honor, et cetera), Jack now knows that violence and tragedy in life simply happen. Sobriety allows him prescience: better to prepare oneself than to self-medicate.

Because Jack remains the sole (drinking) character to undergo any sort of personal reform, he, alone, is left standing. The drinking characters from both sides of the class divide become complicit in their own destruction, the result of Stark's forcing social relations that disrupt the status quo. Warren portrays these doomed trajectories through the divergent paths born out of Jack and Willie's problem drinking and, on a broader level, the symbolic ways that *all* drinking characters consume on competing sides of the socio-political line. Warren makes clear that, at least now as a foreign fascist threat looms, the Irwins of the world will never willingly share their likker with the Starks seeking power. Neither of the ideological poles represented by Irwin and Stark can reconcile a modernizing world with a South that needs to let in a little fresh air. In the end, Jack's sober makeover considers how Stark's failures in the past—and Jack's newfound ability to find truths in this past—hopefully preclude repeating in the present and, more importantly for him, the future. For, by the story's end, Jack warns his mother

of the looming fascist threat that has informed the entire novel—"'You better stay out of Europe,' I said. 'All hell is going to break loose over there and not long either'" (430)—and this worldly awareness best exemplifies the foresight he has gained through his re-examination of history. Such a tidy ending to the novel, however, betrays some essential ambiguity to the notion of Jack as a recovering alcoholic, as well as the possibility of ideological stability resulting from Stark's death.

After the Boss dies, Tiny Duffy becomes Governor. Through Sadie Burke, now institutionalized for the emotional toll[16] this takes on her (as well as the guilt from her complicity in it), Jack learns that Duffy indirectly called for the hit on Stark by letting leak to Adam the fact that Anne was sleeping with the Boss. Always uneasy about his role as subordinate to Stark and constantly browbeaten by him, Duffy projects insecurity, something Jack exploits in their confrontation. Jack informs the new Governor that, just like old times as his adviser to the Boss, he has the information to "make it stick":

[16] The scope of this chapter does not allow for a proper analysis of Sadie Burke's drinking. As the only prominent female drinker (and a heavy drinker, at that) in the text, Sadie's consumption is alcoholic, given Jellinek's loose definition. Sadie's institutionalization by novel's end requires some historical contextualization, since I see it as another portrayal of addiction and (potential) recovery in the novel. During the second half of the nineteenth century, inebriate asylums began appearing as refuges for addicts. These institutions were euphemistically dubbed "lodging houses, inebriate homes, inebriate asylums, sanataria, reformatories, retreats, and—later—inebriate farms and inebriate asylums" (White 23). Where inebriate asylums tended to be larger in scale and state-run, inebriate homes "provided a minimal level of treatment activity in addition to room and board" (23). Dr. T.D. Crothers developed a five-pronged classification system to categorize inebriates. Sadie most closely follows the "emotional inebriate" definition, as one "who used spirits in an attempt to restore order to frequently unstable emotions" (34). Indeed, Sadie continuously suffers from emotional insecurities, which exacerbate her drinking. As a child, her father was an abusive drunk. A bout with smallpox leaves Sadie's face pocked, which she attempts (unsuccessfully) to hide with make-up. Sadie's short-cropped hair, unattractive face (both of which Jack details repeatedly), and aggressive behavior all mark her with an outward masculinity common in perceptions of woman alcoholics. She is also promiscuous, insofar as she remains the other woman in Willie Stark's ongoing extramarital affair. On the two occasions where Stark cheats on her, Sadie becomes emotionally unhinged. I include these details to suggest that her occupancy at Millett Sanatorium, dubiously referred to by Jack as "a rest home," is as much for treatment from alcoholism (or, more appropriately, "emotional inebriety") as anything else. Sadie tells Jack, "'I didn't come out here because there was anything wrong with me. I came here because I was tired. I wanted a rest'" (408). Never one to be coerced against her wishes to do anything, Sadie stubbornly maintains that her asylum is only meant as a rest. However, one cannot help but read the entirety of her personal and drinking histories as leading to her current state.

> "You are a funny old fat man, Tiny, with your heart getting bad and your liver nigh gone … So now I'm going to drink up your whisky and spit in the glass and go."
>
> So I drank off the whisky, dropped the glass on the floor … and started for the door. I had almost got there, when I heard a croak from the couch. I looked around.
>
> "It—" he croaked, "it won't stand in a court." I shook my head.
>
> "No," I said, "it won't. But you still got plenty to worry about" (415).

Able to summon Stark's booze-fueled gumption to confront one last time, Jack uses this semi-relapse to re-establish power over this former whipping post. Note how Jack describes each of them: Duffy is put on the defensive and becomes the weaker player, which Jack shows through a problematic relation to alcohol, "your liver nigh gone." Although Jack "drank off the whiskey," he also "spit[s] [it] in the glass," signaling the personal control (and possession of power in this exchange) he has over alcohol, symbolized when he "drop[s] the glass on the floor." By making whiskey the central prop in this scene, Jack recasts alcohol as the problem that plagues forward movement in the ideological sphere while reaffirming his recovery from it.

With Tiny Duffy uneasily occupying the Governor's chair and Jack's exit from the political stage, the question arises as to where Warren's South now resides relative to modernity. If Jack's narrative of personal addiction metaphorically references the whole South, then it must also consider if/how the region is itself able to negotiate the inevitable confrontation with the modern world. In other words, does a sober Jack mean a sober South, and how far might the metaphor of addiction (and subsequent recovery) be taken as a signifier of a region that is rehabilitated? Stark's death nullifies any further progression of the fascist state (Duffy is imbued in the Boss's ideology and political maneuvering, but he lacks the disposition to implement these policies on his own) even though his former aide has assumed the governorship. At this point, Jack draws back from the political action, instead focusing on tying up the loose ends from the Stark situation. Jack chooses not to out Duffy as the conspirator indirectly responsible for the

assassination, since such action would perpetuate the drama that has plagued him and the state for many years. Now, Jack is interested in allaying his philosophical anxiety with the past. In language relevant to Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer, Jack realizes that "my mother gave me back the past. I could now accept the past which I had before felt was tainted and horrible. I could accept the past now because I could accept her and be at peace with her and with myself" (432). Such emotional balance has thus far eluded him throughout. Jack furthers this sentiment when he tells Anne the truth about his biological father: "I tried to tell her how if you could not accept the past and its burden there was no future, for without one there cannot be the other, and how if you could accept the past you might hope for the future, for only out of the past can you make the future" (435). Both statements portray Jack transformed from his former drunken self (who was unable to confront his past without suffering crippling guilt and the burden of his existence) to his present sober self who acknowledges the reality of a changing world but does so without fear or regret.

At last, Jack's alcoholic narrative comes full circle. With a sober mind and proper hindsight, he reconfigures the central focus of the narrative. Rather than dwell on Stark's political reign, Jack sees fit to reflect on how he achieves existential catharsis, which he finds only after quelling his alcoholic addiction:

> This has been the story of Willie Stark, but it is my own story, too. For I have a story. It is the story of a man who lived in the world and to him the world looked one way for a long time and then it looked another and very different way. The change did not happen all at once. Many things happened, and that man did not know when he had any responsibility for them and when he did not. There was, in fact, a time when he came to believe that nobody had any responsibility for anything and there was no god but the Great Twitch (435).

The language here parallels previous alcoholic and recovery narratives, most notably in its tone of removed objectivity. Just like John B. Gough who, in sober hindsight, sees how his "agonized

heart" and "threadbare condition" were only remedied through drink, Jack now understands his former worldview as perpetuating his addiction. Curiously, though, his tone has changed, most notably in his drifting away from an ideology of the Great Twitch, as "he did not believe in the Great Twitch any more" (436). The change in belief further solidifies the therapeutic quality of what is now Jack's full *recovery* narrative—as he tells his story, new revelations occur; Jack's sobriety, like that of other recovering addicts, works as a continual process that requires constant reexamination to maintain.[17]

True, in acknowledging the centrality that Jack's sobriety occupies in his confronting the awful responsibility of Time, one must also understand the precarious state of this sobriety. How realistic is it that Jack will stay sober? A brief aside: when Bill W. was in the depths of alcoholic despair, his newly-sober friend Ebby T. offered up the means through which he dried out: God. Bill realized that Ebby was not forcing religion on him, only telling Bill "'*to believe in a Power greater than [him]self*'" (Raphael 77). When Bill finally embraced this Power, he quit drinking for good, making God a fundamental tenet to A.A. orthodoxy. When Jack moves away from the Twitch metaphor, he, like Bill W., avails himself to a more traditional belief in a Higher Power. Jack admits to believing his father's (the Scholarly Attorney, the man who married his mother and raised him) idea that "Separateness is identity and the only way for God to create, truly create, man was to make him separate from God Himself, and to be separate from God is to be sinful. The creation of evil is therefore the index of God's glory and His power" (Warren 437). This new conception of God allows Jack to understand the therapeutic value that articulating the Stark drama has provided to his personal recovery. Using equal parts Great Twitch and God, Jack finally sees the tumult that has plagued his life up to this point as inconsequential, as a modernizing world freighted with violence and the threat of annihilation allows for Jack's

[17] Although this can hardly be called a relapse, Jack admits to sharing a drink with his mother at this time.

continued gaze of recovery to look upward. No further personal-philosophical struggles will threaten his sobriety as long as he sees sin and God side-by-side.

Such an ending to Jack's alcoholic/recovery narrative risks undercutting the authenticity and sincerity of his previous critical stances against such an overtly religious worldview. Many critics of A.A. treatment remain skeptical of the organization's religious aspect as well as the driving source behind individual recovery. John J. Rumbarger argues that Bill Wilson's obsession with fiscal success somewhat discredits the impetus behind recovery (at least Wilson's recovery). Rumbarger states that Wilson's bottoming out moment resulted not so much from drink but from professional failures that he imagined as having stemmed from alcoholism. Because Wilson's real ailment, according to Rumbarger, was economic instability resulting from the social forces in the early twentieth-century that caused many well-to-do capitalists financial ruin (or at the very least, anxiety over the uncertainty of the ever-expanding global market), then the creation of A.A. must be read as having "'played a major role in diverting attention from the social sources of individual dysfunction to the consequent afflictions of the individual's mind, body, and soul'" (qtd in Raphael 62). Thus, "Abstinence is understood, from this angle, as a kind of puritanical self-abuse designed to reinstantiate and reinforce the nefarious status quo" (62). Other critics like Craig Reinarman take issue with A.A. treatment not only in its appropriation of religious language into a secular (pluralist) ideology but in its inward gesture facilitating recovery—if A.A. allows individuals the means through which to find salvation from the ills befallen them from the bottle, then what about societal maladies that require healing as well? Reinarman cites 12-steppers as possessing the capability to "'participate in movements for social change" even though they "are now enmeshed in a self-help movement that ideologically ignores social change in favor of individual change'" (qtd in Raphael 184). Matthew J. Raphael ponders

Rumbarger and Reinarman's criticisms of A.A.: "The question begged by such materialist approaches is whether significant social change is ever possible through individual reform or through institutions composed of individuals collaborating in each other's reform" (62).

Raphael ultimately falls somewhere between materialist and socialist approaches, stating that A.A. recovery is for the individual who conceives of his or her drinking as diseased while also admitting that the 12-steps never would have achieved success were there not a strong element of social force (62). I take this time to unspool some common A.A. criticisms[18] in order to more clearly trace the contours of Jack's addiction as well as to identify how both he and the South might indeed face the modern world. While he cannot be pinned down to a specific type of treatment for his literal alcoholism, his metaphorical sobriety contains elements that allow him, as a recovered person, to facilitate meaningful change in the present and the future. For Jack's alcoholic narrative to convince us that he is really ready to confront the awful responsibility of Time, his sobriety must remain consistent. By the end of the novel, Jack and Anne—the only Stark holdovers capable of forward progress—are married, their union symbolic of a past riddled with pain yet one that needs to be understood for them to progress into a meaningful and productive future. To do so, however, they leave Burden's Landing. Yes, Jack confronts his past (he tells the story after all), but he and Anne see no reason to surround themselves with the memories of loved ones who were unable to survive the clash between past and present. As Jack moves toward sobriety throughout the story's chronology, the novel's social and political

[18] By equating A.A. jargon (specifically from the Big Book) to the often racist and decidedly anti-progressive rhetoric associated with nineteenth-century temperance literature, Philip McGowan offers an interesting complication to A.A. as a social recovery model. He argues that A.A. perpetuates the same oppressive sentiment emanating from the Temperance Movement: "The [Big Book] narratives produce some telling facts: the problem drinker … is required to remain anonymous within a society that functions by way of active, yet outdated stereotypes," and "the individual recovery story is a strictly policed AA narrative of conformity rather than the expression or reclamation of an individual's autonomous voice" (28). In other words, while the A.A. paradigm might be successful in pulling people on to the wagon, it fails as a model of social progress in its reinforcing of traditional boundaries that perpetuate inequality and difference.

extremes destroy themselves, suggesting that a new middle ground will emerge if the South is to embrace modernity in a progressive fashion. The reality of such a path remains questionable—regardless of how rehabilitated Jack might actually be, a cure-all for the entire region might be a stretch. However, the possibility remains that a recovered person *can* lead the way toward such a middle ground; how else to explain Stark's fascism and Irwin's conservatism as un-sustaining? Remember that Jack's sobriety combines pieces from several treatments for addiction, which necessarily renders many of the A.A.-specific criticisms moot as they relate to his long-term recovery. What follows with Jack's reinsertion into the world is the possibility that his individual recovery—contrary to what A.A. critics say about the me-first emphasis to treatment in the program (as well as to how Reinhold Niebuhr conceives of individual corruption in a group setting)—resonates alongside the metaphorically healed South, resulting in genuine change. Neither Jack nor Warren speak to the legitimacy of such large scale change, but the point is that the conservative façade of regional social and political mores has cracked, and those from either side of the class divide have been reformed in a meaningful way. Jack himself remains open to the idea of a political reinsertion: "Hugh Miller (once Attorney General under Willie Stark) … will get back into politics, and when he does I'll be along to hold his coat. I've had some valuable experience in that line" (Warren 436).

Chapter Three
"He always called you a rummy": *Suttree*'s Alcoholic Economy of Suffering

"This is the novel right here," I said. "This is the whole city. This is Suttree himself. This is junk, he's junk, this whole city is junk, it's a book about junk. Forget the rest. You can leave now…"
Peter Josyph, *Adventures in Reading Cormac McCarthy*

The two previous chapters examine novels written or set in pre-World War II America, and their representations of alcohol and drinking emblematize tensions present in the nation's social, economic, and cultural consciousness at that time. Though it has not been necessary to dwell too much upon the seismic pre/postwar divide, it is now. While Faulkner and Warren broach the issue of modernity and the South's drunken reaction to it, Cormac McCarthy sets his Tennessee novel *Suttree* (1979) in a South unable to resist it. In *Suttree*, the frightening din of the modern world has reached chaotic crescendo, making McCarthy's South a place that does not anticipate confusion, but, rather, exists drunkenly within it. By identifying postwar capitalism as the signpost of progress, *Suttree* differs significantly from *Sanctuary, Requiem for a Nun*, and *All the King's Men* in its assessment of the South's resistance to the modern world. Where Jack Burden's sobriety symbolizes the potential for the region to progress beyond political extremism, no such promise exists here. For Cornelius Suttree, the novel's alcoholic protagonist, the violent realities of the modern world are omnipresent, and McCarthy's South is darker than anything Jack might have imagined. Just like Gowan Stevens, Temple Drake, and Jack Burden, Suttree finds himself mired in a confusing purgatorial space that magnifies his bewilderment at the modern world. McCarthy's South centralizes its focus on a different alcoholic community, however, one populated by the poor and disinherited whose spokesperson refuses to perpetuate the divide between rich and poor.

McCarthy's representation of postwar consumer capitalism is preoccupied with alcohol and drinking. Stripped of any shred of southern gentility or gentlemanly propriety, the type of

alcoholic drinking in *Suttree*'s postwar South is symptomatic of the destructive consumption occurring on society's margins. This excessive drinking ironically parallels society's material markers of "progress," represented most often through the constant stream of garbage polluting the Tennessee River. In this chapter, I argue that the alcoholic drinking occurring on the outskirts signifies McCarthy's broader critique of modern capitalist overconsumption as a legitimate symbol of progress. I am not subscribing to any specific definition of progress per se, though as I unpack it later, my critical deployment of the term pertains to how the social, political, and/or economic forces address the disparity between the dominant and the dominated, the wealthy and the poor. *Suttree*'s postwar overconsumption occludes hope for collective progress or recovery for the individual alcoholic, as the novel intertwines material and alcoholic consumption as markers (falsely) trumpeting progress as profusion. The specific quality of postwar consumerism also mirrors an evolving sense of how recovery from alcoholism was understood at midcentury, as a cultural shift embracing excess inadvertently ushered in a new drinking paradigm cleaving to notions that abundance be privileged. In his preoccupation with trash-ridden landscapes, McCarthy portrays Suttree and his cohorts as society's castoffs whose abjection is compounded in their capacity to suffer. In this modern world, they suffer greatly and often.

I argue that the moonshine whiskey consumed by these people and the violence stemming from their self-destructive binges foregrounds (much like Prohibition) the legislative failures of regionally specific laws meant to re-instantiate the South's supposedly high moral standing. The midcentury ethos of overconsumption proves especially dangerous for society's downtrodden due precisely to what they consume (moonshine) and how they do it (alcoholically, to excess). As an alcoholic, Suttree's inability (or willed denial) to grasp the consequences of overconsumption stems partly from his increased drinking, and McCarthy's rendering of this

addiction demonstrates how America understood what Lori Rotskoff calls the postwar "alcoholic culture." McCarthy's use of alcohol as critical signifier conflates two types of problematic consumption—materialism and alcoholism—to complicate regional recovery within the progressing nation-state, as well as for the individual alcoholic whose drinking comes to mirror postwar material excess. Both representations of consumption negate the long term possibility that positive change will come to the South, despite critical assertions that read Suttree's concluding exit as ultimately hopeful. By equating alcohol ingestion with material excess, McCarthy shows Suttree's drinking to reaffirm long held critical assertions that postwar imbibing proved symptomatic of postwar affluence. While Suttree and his companions indeed drink to excess—and this excess obversely reflects Knoxville's wealthy class's social and economic hegemony—the broader catastrophic fallout from their disease, I argue, is that alcoholic overconsumption destroys their physical and economic capacity to participate in America's prosperous postwar economy. Caught between two societal poles—he lives as a poor man in protest against the ethical contradictions he sees in his family's high social standing—Suttree embodies the complex ways that progress in the novel becomes untenable as class divisions widen. Suttree's agenda naively assumes that living among the disinherited grants him authority to question how his privileged upbringing is morally incompatible with a progressive worldview that supposedly grants opportunity for all. I suggest that suffering indeed authenticates Suttree's program (to the chagrin of critics like Daniel Traber), though his alcoholism points to a modernizing milieu where recovery for him and the region remains elusive at best, impossible at worst.

Because McCarthy began writing the "twenty-year work-in-progress" (Lincoln 69) much earlier than its 1979 publication date, *Suttree* is uniquely positioned to assess how the South's

"progressive" embrace of modernity was both hypocritical and shortsighted, particularly when the underclass is concerned. As I stated previously, situating the novel as distinctly postwar in its setting is essential to understanding how a midcentury burgeoning of southern prosperity proves unavailable to the marginalized. Historian David R. Goldfield highlights[1] the South's participation in World War II as the moment when the region was jarred from its seemingly endless state of cultural ossification as well as when the material promises of modernity were made apparent:

> Indeed, the human costs of rural displacement and the general persistent underemployment in the region seemed to dissipate overnight. The steady cash income represented a major change in lifestyle for those Southerners accustomed to periodic, subsistence incomes and onerous credit arrangements whose obligations never seemed fulfilled from one year to the next. Now it was possible to plan, to buy, to hope, and to dream. And it was merely for the asking. As the touring *Fortune* correspondent concluded: "For the first time since the 'War Between the States' almost any native of the Deep South who wants a job can get one" (6).

This unbridled optimism remained after the war, as many academics "fervently believed that regional parity was essential for national economic health. And a conscious redistribution of national wealth, coupled with vigorous local developmental efforts, was the surest method to attain that objective" (31). While these academics were correct in their analysis—Goldfield cites influential North Carolina sociologist Howard W. Odum as chief among them—regional resistance to change trumped the enthusiasm for such measures: "The condition of Southern state government was incongruous with the new service-oriented and efficiency-minded entrepreneurs of the urban South. And state government was likely to be more of an obstacle than an ally for some time to come due to the political system and the dominance of one party" (37). Regardless of how politics might have hindered forward movement in the first postwar decade, the South

[1] See Goldfield's *Promised Land: The South Since 1945* (1987) for detailed analysis behind how the postwar South encountered modernity. I address some of his broader conclusions here.

saw astonishing economic growth. The era of prosperity resulting from a coordinated regional response to years of economic stagnation (roughly 1965-1975) created a new regional identity, the Sunbelt South.

I suggest that, although *Suttree* is set in the early 1950s, the fact that its production occurred over the course of nearly twenty years allows the possibility that a Sunbelt ethos informs McCarthy's caustic portrayal of the region's disparate social and economic relations. The Sunbelt South witnessed positive economic growth, approaching fiscal parity for the first time since before the Civil War (124). This transformation resulted in unintended fallout, however. While the middle class began to prosper, the prosperity gap between the poor and everyone else widened immensely:

> By the mid-1970s, although rural Southerners comprised slightly more than one-third of the region's population, they accounted for 55 percent of its poor. And the gap between those left-behinds and the other, more prosperous, agricultural sector was immense and growing. The prosperous sector had adopted an urban lifestyle with modern technological conveniences, well traveled, well clothed, and well read by the standards of the region, living in brick homes and sending their sons and daughters to the best universities (141).

Goldfield cites the "inevitable hangover" of Sunbelt prosperity in a manner speaking directly to Suttree himself, as "The South of the mid-1970s was a crazy quilt of patches of prosperity zigzagging between traditional areas of poverty further bisected by pockets of growth and snippets of new decay" (138-139). Indeed, Sunbelt progress was double-edged, and by simply ignoring the destitution it inadvertently created, the concept of societal improvement became illusory. As I show in this chapter, grossly uneven societal position seriously hinders a positive reading of Suttree's end flight, particularly as McCarthy's postwar South suffers Goldfield's "Sunbelt hangover."

Because much of *Suttree*'s social critique stems from Knoxville's political and legislative situations, some context is necessary to show how the region's conservative attitudes toward drinking indirectly produced the material split between rich and poor and helped foster the proliferation of outlawed liquor production and consumption. Knoxville's stance on alcohol and drinking at midcentury mirrored many Prohibition-era measures outlawing the production, sale, and consumption of liquor, and much like the sentiment emanating from the nineteenth-century Temperance Movement, these Blue Laws were seen as inherently "progressive" in the ways that they sought to insulate society's vulnerable from the evils of drinking. Local prohibition laws in Tennessee, as elsewhere throughout the country (particularly in the South), actually preceded Prohibition, altering, and in some cases encouraging, the economies of liquor running and production. For example, laws were implemented stating that booze could not be sold within four miles of a school. "Amendments in 1899 and 1903," states critic Dianne Luce, "extended the four-mile rule to all towns and cities with a population lower than 150,000," which implicated Knoxville and subsequently produced temperance debate and spectacle (27). Luce continues, "A referendum was held to decide whether the Knoxville city charter should be abolished for the purpose of reincorporating without saloons. It passed in March 1907 … and Knoxville remained more or less a dry city until the sale of liquor was legalized there in 1961" (27). Not surprisingly, illicit taverns peppered east Tennessee and, according to author Ed Hooper, "by the time of national prohibition, [Knoxville] was a leader across the nation in the illegal liquor trade, in both moonshine and the 'stamped variety'" (qtd in Luce 27). John Gunther, noted journalist and vocal critic of southern culture, states that the Knoxville of 1946 was "an extremely puritanical town … [which] serves no alcohol stronger than 3.6 per cent beer, and its more dignified taprooms close at 9:30 P.M.… Perhaps as a result … it is one of the least orderly cities in the South—

Knoxville leads every other town in Tennessee in homicides, automobile thefts, and larceny" (qtd in Luce 27-28). Liquor by the drink was technically outlawed until 1972 (28). Clearly, the Knoxville of the 1950s shared a contradictory quality with other "dry" towns in the South at this time. As I outlined in chapter one, national temperance fused the moral, political, and social into a propaganda machine that necessarily characterized drinkers and non-drinkers relative to their status as moral, law-abiding citizens. If you drank, you were bad; if not, you were good. This entrenched polemic was reified as drinking became a literal manifestation of breaking the law.

McCarthy's literary appropriation of Tennessee's Blue Laws presupposes that the people with whom Suttree carouses embody the demographic that "progressive" measures of prohibition targeted: drinkers. Indeed, the McAnally moonshiners represent a historically visible subset of the time. Historian Andrew Barr states that the local option (the legislative power for smaller municipalities to determine the legality of alcohol production and consumption) inadvertently encouraged the production of illegal spirits to the point where an estimated 70 million gallons of moonshine were distilled each year throughout the South in the 1950s (252). This illegal moonshine economy presented problems on several fronts, all of which contributed to its deviant status as material signifier in the novel. First, backwoods whiskey violated Tennessee Blue Laws prohibiting such production. The ban on alcohol remained steeped in pre-Prohibition temperance rhetoric that fused imbibing with morality. McCarthy's first novel, *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), set in rural east Tennessee between the world wars, contextualizes *Suttree*'s Dry South nicely. The novel's protagonist, John Wesley Ratner, stumbles upon this temperance parade (bear in mind that this is episode postdates Repeal, showing the moral occupation that drinking still held in the southern imaginary):

> *Long paper banners ran the length of the buses proclaiming for Christ in tall red letters, and for sobriety, offering to vote against the devil when and wherever he*

> *ran for office. One by one they passed and again the multicolored flags in small children's hands waving at the spectators who in turn mopped listlessly at their necks and faces with handkerchiefs. A blue and yellow card legended: Don't Make My Daddy a Drunkard fell to the street like a stricken bird…* (McCarthy 80-81).

In addition, the fringe network of exchange sidestepped taxation, undercutting potential governmental revenue streams. Again, *The Orchard Keeper* precedes *Suttree* in establishing the contradictory ways that local prohibition was enforced only sparingly. One bootlegger admits, "Well, I had a little disagreement with these fellers … as to whether a man can haul untaxed whiskey over tax kept roads or whether by not payin the whiskey tax he forfeits the privilege of drivin over the roads the whiskey don't keep up that ain't taxed or if it was would be illegal anyway. I think what they do is depart you" (210). Finally, and most relevant to the novel, participation in the moonshine economy exacted an immense physical toll in its alcoholic participants. As the McAnally men satisfy their alcoholic cravings, they become increasingly subject to the (chemical) qualities inherent in backwoods liquor. Their unchecked alcoholism demands liquor, but the booze produced in the moonshine economy induces great suffering that, in the end, signifies the futility in wholesale resistance to the paradoxical vicissitudes of progress.

With little mind paid to the overwhelming presence of alcohol and drinking in the novel, influential McCarthy critic Vereen Bell identifies the protagonist's central concern as a preoccupation with the figurative transcendence of death, shown in Suttree's struggle to reconcile his birthright with his decision to forsake a life of privilege. The only way Suttree achieves transcendence is through a complete separation from his familial past and total immersion in Knoxville's seedy destitution where he can aptly "come to terms with what is" so that he can, in the end, "affirm life" (Bell 70). The concluding scene in *Suttree* perhaps offers

hope for him, suggesting that, despite the psychological and physical pains inflicted on him by the modern world, Suttree's decision to leave the place of his birth will actually "affirm life," allowing him to overcome the fear of death that plagues him throughout. As Suttree prepares to take flight, he passes a construction crew where "[c]arpenters were hammering up forms and a cement truck waited on with its drum slowly clanking" (McCarthy 470). A boy carrying water offers him a drink. He "came up to Suttree where he stood by the roadside and swung the bucket around and brought the dipper up all bright and dripping and offered it.… He took the dipper and drank and gave it back" (470-471). On the surface, this gesture offers little evidence to support Bell's idea that Suttree's exit affirms life. However, when considered in the context of the other substance Suttree has ingested *ad nauseum*—moonshine liquor—the "drink of water is pure life giving," according to critic John Cant, particularly "in contrast to the deathly 'splo' whiskey that has slaked the thirsts of the residents of McAnally" throughout (112). This life giving water is neither purchased nor offered as a condition for employment, therefore existing outside of the figurative bounds of any conventional economy. And because water (and not whiskey) is proffered and Suttree's drink provides sustenance, his life appears to be affirmed.

Suttree's flight alludes to hope for him in the future as a man who has confronted his conflicted existential place in the modern world and been born anew, fully capable of navigating the choppy waters of a progressing postwar America. Despite the hope engendered in Suttree's flight, however, what remains unaddressed in Bell's and Cant's optimism is what and who he leaves behind, specifically all the disinherited still populating Knoxville's margins. Considering the fact that McAnally Flats is being destroyed and its residents violently displaced by the construction of a new highway, Suttree's exit might stem as much from necessity as it does from existential clarity gained from time served among the poor. Regardless, the novel's concluding

scene contains all of the contextual elements necessary to view Suttree's life optimistically or not. These elements—alcohol and the modern economy (capitalism) and Suttree's problematic relationship to both—not only speak to Suttree's personal transcendence but to McCarthy's societal critique of the South's postwar moral and material disparity. David Holloway echoes other critics in citing how *Suttree*, like McCarthy's other early works, possesses a "traditional anxiety about the impact of historical change on a precapitalist socioeconomic order" (63). Much of the change in the novel is material, as modernity looms large throughout as a force ushering social and economic change, but doing so at a great psychological and spiritual cost to those who do not reap the rewards of progress.

On the whole, *Suttree* wastes little time dwelling on material disparity; McCarthy's postwar South simply *is*, and the only critic actively challenging the morality of longstanding hegemony is Suttree himself. McCarthy's treatment of class antagonisms present in the postwar years resonates loudest when the persons living on the margins attempt to assimilate into a world offering prosperity, only to suffer tremendously and, ultimately, to fail. The novel's primary material lens through which to portray the clash of margins and modernity is alcohol, specifically the illegal, moonshined variety. A brief sketch illustrates the contradictions inherent in notions of "progress," as well as how alcohol signifies something abject, deviant, and aberrant relative to such progress. Suttree meets Reese, supposedly a man of God despite the fact that he drinks in excess, squanders money, and chases women while his wife and children remain dutiful to him. His "ministry" is characterized by the contradiction between his beliefs and his lifestyle: "Don't you read scripture and drink that, [his wife] said" (McCarthy 320). For all of Reese's moral contradictions and sleazy negotiations as a "pearl" salesman (he and his family mine worthless lake pearls which they pawn for money to unsuspecting country proprietors), he becomes

tragically humanized when his daughter Wanda is killed by a crashing slate wall during a thunderstorm. Holding his daughter, Reese "held his two fists at his breast and cried to the darkness over them all. O God I caint take it no more. Please lift this burden from me for I caint bear it" (362-363). Reese's pleas confirm what the novel repeatedly shows: Suttree and Reese share the "burden" of a world filled with great and inevitable suffering. As the narrative summarily reads, "there are no absolutes in human misery and things can always get worse" (372).

Indeed things can get worse—and they often do—especially when alcohol is consumed, for most who suffer on Knoxville's margins are afflicted by alcoholism,[2] a condition that magnifies their misery. Reese and Suttree embark upon a monumental bender preceding Wanda's death. The details of the binge show the nuances of illicit marginal consumption, testifying to the lengths these alcoholics go to feed their addictions. This episode allows Reese to free himself from cumbersome domestic shackles, though also distracting him from any productive work that *might* move the family above harsh marginalized subsistence. Ostensibly on a mission into town to sell the lake pearls, Reese and Suttree cab toward the Green Room, a backwoods watering hole populated by moonshine and loose women. The cab driver asks their drink of preference: "The driver took them up a gravel drive to the back of an old house. A yellow bulb hung burning from the naked night above them. The driver got out and a man came from the door and the two of them went across the yard and behind a garage. When they came back the driver was holding a pint of whiskey down the side of his leg" (337). The covert nature

[2] As in the previous chapter, I am not subscribing to any concrete definition of "alcoholic," particularly since Suttree and the McAnally Flats moonshiners consume with a frequency and severity that would make Willie Stark blush. Categorical alcoholism here stands for destructive alcohol consumption. Where the disease meets cultural resistance is not in how it is defined, but rather in how it is conceived in hindering participation in the modern economy. My analysis touches on this later.

of the exchange stems from the illegality of the transaction—liquor is outlawed in Knoxville at this time. The aftermath of the Green Room is predictably horrific: "When he woke it was daylight and he was lying in a field" (341). Their immediate concern is to procure more whiskey either as a hair-of-the-dog hangover remedy or simply to quench a lingering thirst for booze. When the two men approach a bootlegger and realize that neither has money to pay for whiskey, Reese attempts to use a worthless lake pearl to facilitate the exchange:

> What's that supposed to be? said the bootlegger.
> A pearl. Go on. Take a look at it.
> You sons of bitches get on away from here, said the bootlegger, and slammed the little window shut (343).

Reese finally responds to the rejection, "Boy I hate a dumb son of a bitch like that that dont know the value of nothing." Reese's knowledge of such value is informed, of course, by his social and economic status as someone existing on the margins, a poor drinker whose poor drunkenness disallows participation in any conventional economy. Aware of Reese's position, Suttree aptly replies, "Let's get the hell out of here. It's a long way home" (343). When they finally return to the family camping near a river, Reese's wife chastises the fact that they return empty handed: "Reese tried to detain [Suttree] to verify various lies but he went on" (348).

The details of Reese and Suttree's excursion are necessary to understand how the novel characterizes drinking as something at once freeing and recreational, but also all-consuming and self-destructive for society's outliers. For these alcoholics, liquor becomes *the* material inducer of their temporal suffering. Alcoholic consumption exacerbates their individual and collective miseries—individual in the painful physical suffering, collective in prohibiting meaningful engagement with the forces of progress that are supposedly available amid America's postwar boom. I identify the marginalized populace of McAnally Flats as participating in an *alcoholic economy of suffering*. Characterizing the alcoholic economy of suffering is its two-sidedness: it

allows the McAnally folk to consume over and against the legal social economy of society's materially affluent, but it also stymies any possibility for these addicted consumers to participate meaningfully in the promises of modern progress. For Suttree, the alcoholic economy of suffering compromises his identity as social critic, since he too is an alcoholic whose drinking repeatedly hinders his ability to grasp fully the ambiguities ever-present in the modern world. As I will discuss shortly, critics such as Daniel Traber rightly question the authenticity of Suttree's social program, though they do not properly account for the suffering he endures living as a poor man overlooked by the promises of modern progress and, more importantly, as an alcoholic whose benders result in violence. Although Suttree escapes the margins in the end, his flight does little to dispel the seductive and destructive pull of the alcoholic economy of suffering. There is no guarantee that he will resist the "splo" whiskey—his notorious family history suggests that alcoholism will always plague him. More to the point, the abject persons who cannot escape their modern plights will forever remain marginalized. Thus, any sweeping notion of progress or success (either for Suttree the individual or for McAnally as a collective) must be tempered by the harsh reality that these marginalized addicts simply cannot assimilate into the modern social economy in America at midcentury.

America's social and economic identities underwent significant revision at this time. In the postwar years, a burgeoning economy became identified with a material culture that produced and consumed in excess, thus signifying success and prosperity. This prosperity, however, came at a price, particularly for drinkers. Rotskoff cites journalist Herbert Bloch and economist John Kenneth Galbraith as cultural touchstones who did not trumpet the virtues of postwar material abundance. While the postwar years marked a high point of opulence, they also ushered in a paradigm of rampant consumerism with unintended consequences. I quote

extensively from Rotskoff as she dissects Galbraith's remarks from a 1952 *Harper's* article in which he "painted a picture of consumer capitalism out of control; in his pessimistic view Americans were getting too much of some not very good things" (Rotskoff 230). This undisciplined consumerism represented a multi-pronged threat:

> On one level Galbraith criticized U.S. consumption in its economic sense—when "consumption" is defined to mean "the purchasing and using up of goods and services." But embedded within his critique and consumption on a national level lay concerns about consumption by individuals; his comments implicitly linked patterns of commerce to the bodily ingestion of advertised products. According to Galbraith, the "unseemly economics of opulence" were not merely distasteful; they could be downright dangerous to the individual and the social body alike. In an era that increasingly sanctioned compulsive spending, intense periodic leisure, and self-fulfillment through the purchase of goods and services, it is perhaps no surprise that Americans often came to see themselves as *victims* of their desires and appetites. Though the dominant ethos of modern consumerism celebrated the consumption of commodities (including alcoholic beverages) as the key to personal well-being, excessive drinking was figured not as a means to a therapeutic end but as a threat to emotional and physical health (230).

Imbibing, then, becomes consumption divorced from its broader economic definition, standing for the *literal* ingestion of something, which, for our purposes, is alcohol. Now, excess becomes double-edged: conspicuous consumption might signal prosperity, but literal consumption, in the case of the novel's abject (drinking) population, signals despair(ity).

In a postwar culture encouraging the pursuit of material desires, "it is fitting that alcoholism metaphorically represented consumer culture run amok" (230), as the consumption of alcohol came to be viewed as a dangerous product of excess in its capacity to induce addiction. Recall that, by midcentury, Alcoholics Anonymous was the most successful treatment for the disease of alcoholism, and that its embracing of the medical paradigm allowed for seepage of A.A. terminology and awareness into the broader cultural lexicon. The dovetailing of societal overconsumption with A.A.'s increasing presence produced new understanding of how addiction and materialism aligned themselves conceptually, which necessarily affected how/where A.A.

understood itself as a treatment for this overconsumption. A.A. trustee Bernard B. Smith trumpeted the broader (metaphorical) function of Twelve Step ideology at this time: "The drinking alcoholic had 'no monopoly on unhappiness or on the feeling that life lacks purpose and fulfillment.' But in his addiction to the bottle, the alcoholic epitomized the extent to which most Americans had become enslaved 'to the false ideals of a materialistic society'" (qtd in Rotskoff, 232). Alcoholism, then, becomes nothing short of "a paradigmatic illness in a consumption-oriented age" (232), exacerbated by "the continual attempt to acquire commodified experiences," that "signified an addiction to addiction itself: the more one drank in search for pleasure, the less fulfilled one felt" (233). Alcoholic addiction and societal materialism came to be viewed as two sides of the same consumer coin. The metaphor of addiction here—unlike Willie Stark's metaphorical drunkenness as fascist ideology—points to material excess; postwar America consumes addictively, like alcoholics drink alcoholically, and where A.A. offers a way out for the drunkard, no such solution cures ostentatious prosperity.

In the novel, material and alcoholic excess exist in stark relation to one another. McAnally Flats and the rest of Knoxville are separated by a consumerist divide between those who consume legally and those who swill moonshine, an form of (illegal) production and (destructive) consumption. Second only to the Tennessee River in its ubiquity, the moonshined liquor passing between persons on the margins signifies a consumer rejection of the bourgeois materialist status quo—it is illegal to make and to drink, after all, and thus exists in direct opposition to the dominant consumer culture. Of course, alcohol's illegality does not automatically place it in antagonistic opposition to the dominant culture (as the aforementioned historical examples show, many, from poor to affluent, consumed illegally), that is, until outlawed drinking is enacted alcoholically. As I will show, the disease of alcoholism was looked

down upon by some at this time precisely because it was seen as hindering participation in the modern economy by hegemonic (bourgeois) purveyors of the dominant culture. The inherent tragedy in this protesting signifier, however, is that on the fringes, liquor is the most frequently abused material product one could consume. Contrary to other fringe economies depending on things like stolen goods reused or repurposed scrap metal,[3] the liquor trade—for profit or for pleasure—cannot subsist as an alternative means of production because it pulls alcoholics down in to the (unproductive) vortex of addiction and, consequently, suffering. Because Suttree and his companions drink alcoholically, booze proves unsustainable and self-destructive as a signifier opposing the capitalist status quo. As men who cannot drink with discipline or in moderation, this alternate economic enterprise dooms them as uncontrolled producers and consumers. Moonshining exists as an alternative to capitalist consumerism in its aberrant status and illegality and as an expression of this consumerism's excessive impulses.

While the moonshine economy grants these men a degree of autonomy that allows them to exist alongside the forces that oppress them, it also induces great suffering. Suffering, I argue, authenticates Suttree's program of exile as someone fully invested in criticizing material disparity. However, any suggestion that Suttree is free or recovered in his flight at the novel's conclusion must be mitigated by the idea that those of the moonshine economy are destined to fail miserably, as the South's postwar progressive measures exacerbate societal inequalities that

[3] Illegal moonshine stands alone as a non-subsistent alternative to the legal economy of exchange due to the fact that it feeds the addictions of its producers whose alcoholism cannot resist the pull of the next drinking bout. However, moonshining is not the only alternative economy springing from the margins. Because most of the novel's fringe-living inhabitants are excluded from the fruits of the modern economy, they necessarily gravitate toward aberrant forms of work that, in the end, are deemed inappropriate within Knoxville's legal or accepted economy. One memorable instance is Gene Harrogate's bat poisoning scheme. Due to the threat of rabid bats, the city offers one dollar for every dead (rabid) bat turned in to the authorities for study. Suffering from a profound lack of intellect and intuition, Harrogate poisons forty-two bats with strychnine, assuming that this will pass for $42.00. Of course, his scheme is uncovered and he is not given the money, though the doctor ("feeling the spirit of things") interrogating him gives him "a dollar and a quarter" (plus dinner and ice cream) for the Harrogate's explanation of how he poisoned the bats. What the doctor perceives as playful back-and-forth with a country bumpkin remains something entirely different to Harrogate: "Maybe a dollar and a quarter aint nothing to you but it is to me" (McCarthy 219).

have existed long prior. Suttree's menial existence on the Tennessee River stems from a rejection of his family but, on a broader scale, it is meant "to resist the malevolent self-interest he finds in society" (Traber 35). Indeed, Suttree's repudiation of his family signifies a mere fraction of what his exile really means relative to the novel's larger critique of modern capitalism. What, though, does this critique accomplish? Better yet, what *can* Suttree's societal critique accomplish? According to McCarthy critic Daniel Traber, not much. Traber strongly questions Suttree's Beat-like idea that societal change occurs through individual transformation, especially when the individual comes from privilege. Traber states, "Suttree has come to the conclusion that a rudimentary existence on the river, without an excess of material accoutrements or civic obligations, is going to answer his questions about life's meaning. It will force him to strip himself of everything he has been taught in order to relearn what is truly important and necessary" (35). Traber implies that Suttree's self-marginalization somehow lacks authenticity. Suttree deserves more credit in his program of rebellion, which extends well beyond some upper-crust Beat self-congratulating. Traber roots much of his condescension toward Suttree in the novel's historical context, as "attaining self-autonomy in post-war America cannot be accomplished simply by moving away from the visible seat of cultural control into the supposedly freer anonymity of the wilderness" (35).

According to Traber, then, Suttree's entire program of rebellion/critique is fixed in a double bind: he remains ideologically opposed to a "progressive" society ordered by a bourgeois worldview, yet his background renders him unable to escape complicity in this system. Suttree "is not actually seeking isolation from the community, rather he is searching for an alternative style of community. Instead of being interested in a form of individualism which supports self-interest, he wants a society which is concerned with the welfare of all its citizens because he

comes to realize that the individual is incapable of being disentangled from the community" (39). What is wrong with this genuinely progressive worldview? For Traber, no amount of desire to change disparate societal conditions can actually facilitate this change, which effectively nullifies Suttree's social consciousness. He continues, "Suttree empathizes with his marginalized friends and eventually comes to believe that all humans are connected to each other through their suffering. But his fault lies in failing to make an attempt to amend that suffering. He has severed his connections to those powerful people who could effect change" and, in the end, "simply walks away from an untenable situation and leaves the system wholly intact" (44). The danger of such ill-conceived social and political protest is that "By turning his back [Suttree] leaves the power structures in place, ever more capable of increasing the reach of macropower into the microspaces of Knoxville" (44). John Cant is not as critical of Suttree, but he echoes some of Traber's sentiment: McCarthy "point[s] out the destructive consequences of structuring the consciousness of individuals by means of powerful mythologies which they are not in a position to live out" (9).

I quote Traber at length to pinpoint the fractures in his argument where an analytical framing of how the alcoholic economy of suffering perhaps elevates Suttree's mission beyond mere hipster fantasy. Where both Traber's and Cant's criticisms prove nearsighted is in how Suttree actually lives on the fringe. Equally as important in muting Traber's critique is specifying how McCarthy engages in a societal critique through the McAnally Flats moonshine economy. Once more, Traber:

> This [marginalized] way of life appeals to Suttree because it constitutes an antithetical value system denying the strength of the dominant power formations (be they political, social, economic, or cultural). By preferring mornings in a bar to an office or warehouse job, the discourse of a Protestant work ethic has been robbed of its validity. The naturalized values of America—duty, industry,

> sobriety, and patriotism—are shown to be vacuous fictions used to maintain the status quo (37).

Precisely! Suttree and his companions do not drink to consciously resist the status quo, but their doing so does not change the fact that shared consumption of moonshine alcohol nonetheless functions as an alternative to it. So why, then, do these people drink and what does this say about the authenticity of Suttree's self-marginalization? Being born of privilege into a family whose class contradictions are further polarized by alcoholism produces anxiety in Suttree, much of which is salved through his willed separation from his relatives. Now, as a fallen bourgeoisie who willingly takes up with society's destitute, Suttree occupies a middle ground between where he comes from (material privilege) and where he wants to be (not even he knows, since meaning/clarity in the modern world eludes him). His existence no longer embodies outright confusion about how to morally engage with the modern world. Throughout the entire novel, Suttree wrestles with a host of emotions—anger, sadness, confusion—which he quells through alcoholic self-medication. The liminal places where he carouses with Knoxville's disinherited becomes a cultural (sub)space where alcoholic drinking resists broader societal conception. Free from the social mores that disapprove of diseased consumption and separate from any prevailing awareness of the disease of alcoholism, McAnally's occupants indeed subvert the status quo that Traber is convinced Suttree merely perpetuates. They do so, however, at an extreme price. Herein lies the novel's most pointed, yet unstated, critique of postwar capitalist excess: the marginalized underclass who resist the status quo are made to suffer, suggesting that, in McCarthy's modernizing South, any Traberian notion that one person's exit might by (symbolically) responsible for "leav[ing] the system wholly intact," thereby leaving the marginalized more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of modernity, is overstated. Before I explicate

the nuances of this alternative alcoholic economy of suffering, a critical model framing Suttree's suffering is necessary.

In his work *Mourning and Melancholia*, Seth Moglen argues that modernist writing emerged as a reaction to the advent of global, monopoly capitalism and all of its destructive and disorienting tendencies. Modernist writers responded to a profound and collective sense of loss, as monopoly capitalism cracked longstanding pillars upholding the American social and cultural psyches. Capitalism produced a pervasive anxiety—both in the authors and in their works—whereby modernist writers forked into one of two categories in response, mourning or melancholia. Using Freudian psychoanalysis, Moglen defines mourning, in simple terms, as the grief following the loss of a loved one. The mourner has no interest in the outside world and cannot "adopt a new object of love." The mourner often conjures memories of the loved one: "while the mourner keeps the lost object alive in memory, this remembering takes place always in conjunction with the painful recognition that the object is, in reality, gone" (12). Through this process, the mourner eventually ceases mourning and has the capacity to love once again. Melancholy proves more dire than mourning, as the "grief of the melancholic is accompanied by acute feelings of self-beratement or self-hatred: large funds of anger and aggression are vented against the self" (12). Moglen cites many canonical modernist writers (Faulkner, Eliot, Fitzgerald, Hemingway) whose response to the injuries of modern capitalism was given, understood as ever-present, and, thus, unacknowledged. For these writers, resistance to the evils perpetuated by modern capitalism was futile. Using Freud's dyadic model of the subject (the mourner) and the object (what has been lost), Moglen adds a third dynamic (to make this a triadic model), "*the social forces* that have destroyed that object or made it unavailable" (15).

This triadic analysis considers the social, economic, and political context in order to diagnose mourning or melancholia.

Moglen distinguishes more between mourning and melancholia as related to the social forces node of the triadic model. Speaking to melancholia, Moglen states, "It should be equally clear that the loss of large ideals and social formations will always involve ambivalence: at the very least there will be anger that these things have allowed themselves to be destroyed, through whatever vulnerability or inadequacy" (15). Furthermore, "In many cases, the rage they felt [at the loss of ideals, movements, and social-cultural formations] was directed both at themselves and, misanthropically, at the entire world around them" (15). Inherent in Moglen's model is the strong current that social change produces in modernist writing, particularly as melancholic modernism surfaced when progress was assumed to be impossible given the historical moment. On the other hand, modernist writers of mourning possessed the capacity to confront the uncertain fallout of modern capitalism in such a way that social change *was* wholly possible. These writers—he cites Hurston, Hughes, and William Carlos Williams—share a commitment to resistance that makes provisions for progress. To summarize, Moglen identifies two categories of modernist writers whose responses to capitalism reveal "a struggle between those who imagined that the alienation and injustice of modern life reflected grim and unalterable facts about human nature [melancholia] and those who insisted that these inhumane circumstances had been produced by a destructive social order that could be remade [mourning]" (XIV).

I provide this thumbnail of Moglen in an attempt to locate Suttree (or McCarthy himself, since Moglen's argument links author and text directly) in relation to the mourning-melancholia paradigm. Casting Suttree somewhere within Moglen's theoretical frame presents conceptual challenges, however. Addressing some discrepancies first, classifying Cormac McCarthy as an

explicitly modernist[4] writer proves problematic in terms of chronology, since the writers in Moglen's study generally fall into a 1920s-1930s timeframe. These years are essential to his analysis mainly in that an increasing awareness of global capitalism took root then, and the melancholic writers could not fully reconcile the individual-collective loss that stemmed from this trend.[5] Furthermore, Moglen's model does not quite fit for McCarthy in that much of the confusion caused by modern capitalism was also closely linked to the *fin-de-siecle* industrialism as the material manifestation of global capitalism. In both of these cases—the chronological disparity and the industrialist reaction—McCarthy's deviations from Moglen are not insurmountable in appropriating his model as a means through which to contextualize *Suttree*'s alcoholic economy of suffering. Although *Suttree* is published in 1979, the novel's temporal action occurs in the early 1950s (a mere 15-20 years after Moglen's modernists). I am not so much interested in the strictures of chronology, though, as much as I am in the social forces to which the writers are responding. Where melancholic modernists react to a changing world that is suddenly foreign to them, I argue that McCarthy does the same. Suttree's confusion, however, stems from a postwar (not post-industrial/prewar) America (South) reacting to an influx of economic and political measures of progress that promise improvement but instead profoundly disrupt a way of life. A midcentury America can hardly be called newly industrialist—industrialism has long since arrived—but it can be called commercial, which follows a

[4] I am not interested in a ledger column to categorize McCarthy explicitly as a (post)modernist, only in how his writing responds to social change in relation to capitalism.

[5] A good example of how global monopoly capitalism begets a sense of melancholia occurs in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) when Jason Compson, who fancies himself a savvy businessman, attempts to profit on the stock market. After losing money before he has the chance to cash out, Jason asks the telegraph officer how anyone could possibly "'expect a man to do anything? The whole dam top could blow off and we'd not know it.'" The clerk replies, "'I dont expect you to do anything,' he says. 'They changed that law making folks play the cotton market'" (142). Jason fumes to himself, "Dam if I believe anybody knows anything about the dam thing except the ones that sit back in those New York offices and watch the country suckers come and beg them to take their money" (142).

melancholic through-line from industrialism as an unintended consequence from blind faith in the progressive measures inherent in modern capitalist production and consumption.

I want to add a third category to Moglen's model, which takes a necessary postwar step beyond mourning and melancholia and offers another means through which socially conscious writers responded to modern capitalism. This category is *suffering*, embodied in the novel as a response to the loss of self and place as a result of the excesses of postwar consumerism. Contrary to melancholic writers (and mourners to some degree), McCarthy has the benefit of historical hindsight; portraying class disparity in the aftermath of World War II but written over the course of twenty years, McCarthy has seen firsthand how material prosperity begets irresponsible consumerism which continues to alienate and confuse, and, therefore, challenge the notion that social progress is even possible. McCarthy's historical distance from the canonical modernists precludes him from identifying with either mourning or melancholia, since, using Moglen's triadic model, the social forces at play in the novel are substantially different and represent a new context, new threats. Rather than resigning to a confusing world (melancholia) or bravely committing to resisting the status quo (mourning), Suttree does both and neither. In McCarthy's postwar South, alcohol's overwhelming presence symbolizes both collective resistance to oppressive power structures and a destructive pantomiming of them, while simultaneously inducing literal and figurative suffering in its diseased and marginalized consumers. As the McAnally Flats populace consumes alcohol as an intensified version of the material overconsumption that the more affluent members of the community engage in, this consumption becomes a means of and resistance to oppression, an intensified symptom of a broader social ill and an alternative to the conditions that create the illness. And while Suttree leaves at the end of the novel, his individual transcendence above the grim conditions inspires

little hope for progress at the societal level, since McCarthy's postwar world lacks any seeds yielding the transformative potential for change.

For all of the eye-rolling that Suttree's supposed ideological self-righteousness might induce in Traber and Cant, their criticism fails to account properly for his chosen living space, which McCarthy depicts as the receptacle of modern capitalism's wasteful excess: "When [Suttree] came upon the river again it was upon a dead and swollen backwater of coves and sloughs where slime and froth obscures the shapes of floating jars and bottles and where lightbulbs peered from the slowly heaving jetsam like great barren eyes" (McCarthy 121). The novel abounds with these descriptions, and the overflow of excess materialism permeates what was once a beautiful pastoral backdrop. Throughout the novel, the Tennessee River proves to be the anti-Mississippi of Huck Finn; instead of a symbolic route to salvation, it acts as a locus of death—a place where Suttree and his companions only temporarily avoid the grim realities of their lives in the modern world—and a receptacle of capitalist overproduction and unconscionable discarding. Much contemporary criticism identifies how waste, "modernization and change [are] strong in the Tennessee novels" (Cant 44), which remains consistent with the narrative recurrence of scenes like the one cited above. Dianne Luce bridges the conceptual gap between McCarthy's littered landscape and unrestrained postwar abundance:

> On the Tennessee River bank Suttree occupies a liminal world between subsistence and commercialism, a wilderness and city, poverty and middle class, communion and isolation, aspiration and materialism. The river and the city are metaphors for Suttree's spiritual imprisonment, his struggles with despair, his intermittent efforts to find a vision that will free him from his own kind of drowning in materialism—the materialism of mortal flesh and the materialism of American culture (197).

Implicit in this liminal world—in fact, ordering this liminal world—is the profound material chasm between McAnally's downtrodden inhabitants and those living comfortably inside Knoxville's hustle and bustle economy.

The societal divide between prosperous and destitute is widest in the descriptions of the commercialist infringement upon the natural world. The prologue sets the tone for a postwar society whose physical landscape has been gashed by unbridled cites of production and consumption: "*This city constructed on no known paradigm, a mongrel architecture reading back through the works of man in a brief delineation of the aberrant disordered and mad … Factory walls of old dark brick, tracks of a spur line grown with weeds*" (3). Note how McCarthy describes gutted industry—"mongrel," "aberrant disordered and mad." This place harbors little confidence in the progressive power of commercialism, as "*We are come to a world within the world*" (3) where McAnally's residents are continually subject to the unwanted conditions propagated by commercial fallout. This world, McCarthy emphasizes repeatedly, exists in symbolic contrast to the comforts afforded to those who have prospered during America's postwar economic boon. The Tennessee River, harboring those social cast-offs and providing the (fiscal) lifeblood to so many, has been ruined by the overflow of commercial waste, a sad reality made more emphatic due to the fact that people are forced to live here: "At night he could hear the sewage gurgling and shuttling along through the pipes hung from the bridge's underbelly overhead. The hum of tires. Faint streetlight fell beyond the dark palings of sumac and blackberry" (137) where "the gray steel trusses of a bridge went past, went past, went past. In the sidelong morning light he saw the shadowed half-shapes of auto shells crouched in dying ivy down a long and barren gut" (149). As the Tennessee River becomes the receptacle for industrial dross floating downstream, McAnally Flats nets persons who symbolize another kind

of waste. Conflating material abandonment and personal isolation, the narrative reads, "Beyond the tracks lay the market warehouses and beyond these the shapeless warrens of McAnally with its complement of pariahs and endless poverty" (295-296). Just as material resources are cast off without thought for the environmental consequences, so are the human resources, and it is where these societal rejects collect (and what they do while there) that the novel offers its strongest critique of modern capitalism[6] through the alcoholic economy of suffering.

Critics have acknowledged the novel's focus on the unforeseen consequences of modernity and this effect on McAnally's populace. John Cant argues that McCarthy "portrays an America in which material progress has not been accompanied by a spiritual or moral counterpart, [and] that Americans are still being influenced by a national myth that is chimerical" (17). The myth recalls the American Dream where, through perseverance, anyone can achieve success ("success" often quantified through material prosperity). But as Cant correctly asserts, any myth divorced from its moral counterweight bears profound consequences for all players involved in the narrative, most tragically the nation itself. Cant's suggestion weighs heavily on the etymological validity of "progress," particularly when the term is presumed to be measured materially. Lacking a spiritual safety mechanism, the idea of progress becomes adulterated by long term consequences initially unforeseen, but, once here, hopelessly irreversible. Steven Frye also sees *Suttree* as McCarthy's indictment of excessive materialism, though he grounds his criticism in the historical moment in east Tennessee (what Moglen would identify as the social forces) to which the author (in)directly responds: "[T]he conflict between the forces of progress and reaction … is central to the conditions young Suttree faces. In the context of the novel, the

[6] Again, this calls to mind some of the historical context outlined by Goldfield who cites the "general prosperity accompanying postindustrial economic growth" causing "an inflationary impact on urban housing prices and services, depressing the condition of the underemployed" (150).

urban development projects of the Tennessee Valley Authority give rise to the modern city, transforming and at times destroying the rural landscape as well as the social institutions and traditions of the mountain communities" (Frye 56). Recalling how Diane Luce articulates Suttree's liminal position as a purgatorial space between, among other things, "subsistence and commercialism," Frye's argument provides a critical antecedent that objectively situates modernity between poles of progress and stagnation. While Cant, Frye, and Luce all read the novel as a harsh treatment of modernity, Frye (momentarily) tempers such criticism. Progressive measures "initiate important and useful material developments, driving people like Gene Harrogate to the city to seek the opportunities provided there. Still, in the end these opportunities offer them only the degraded reality of McAnally Flats, the polluted river corrupted with industrial waste, floating condoms, and refuse in rich profusion" (56). He concludes, "Progress with all its dubious implications is presented in the light of a stark and garish reality" (56).

If progress, "with all of its dubious implications," structures the novel's social economy in such a way as to destroy, displace, and disorder under the guise of some collective societal improvement, then how do McAnally's disinherited subsist when the modern world appears so bleak? Caught confusingly between the social forces of progress and reaction, they drink. They drink to self-medicate, inducing an altered state of consciousness that William C. Spencer views as "indicat[ing] the stages of Suttree's increasing ability to first understand and then cope with his existential problems" (87-88). True, but McAnally Flats houses derelicts who drink more prodigiously than Suttree and their existential problems are hardly mentioned. Granted, alcohol induces altered states of mind that perhaps illuminate something profound for Suttree, but Spencer's analysis of it needs to go deeper to touch on how drunkenness and the rural economy of moonshined liquor signifies a social and political reaction to an oppressive modern status quo.

To deal with social division—to *resist*—the McAnally populace embraces an alternative means of social and economic subsistence that simultaneously opposes the modern commercial order yet remains helplessly subject to it. Again, although consuming alcohol in excess parallels material overconsumption, drinking on the margins remains fundamentally different in that unbridled, self-destructive imbibing occludes alcoholics from immersion into the modern economy.

The moonshine economy shows how marginalized drinking represents resistance to the law while also causing consumers to suffer. Suttree enters Jimmy Smith's, a cabin on the outskirts of town sparsely decorated in "crazed austerity by the remnants of a former grandeur" (McCarthy 22). He sees familiar faces, "a row of drunks." J-Bone hands Suttree a drink:

> What is it?
> Early Times. Best little old drink in the world. Get ye a drink, Sut.
> Suttree held it to the light. Small twigs, debris matter, coiled in the oily liquid. He shook it. Smoke rose from the yellow floor of the bottle. Shit almighty, he said (22).

When Suttree drinks, his "eyes were squeezed shut and he was holding the bottle out to whoever would take it. Goddamn. What is that shit?" J-Bone replies, "Early Times … Drink that and you wont feel a thing the next morning" (23). When Suttree suggests cutting the rotgut with a Coke, J-Bone replies, "We done tried it. It eats the bottom out" (23). Other men enter, each of whom willingly partakes in the Early Times fellowship. One man, Worm, recounts an epic hangover from his last encounter with J-Bone's Early Times: "The last time I drank some of that shit I like to died, I stunk from the inside out. I laid in a tub of hot water all day and climbed out and dried and you could still smell it. I had to burn my clothes. I had the dry heaves, the drizzling shits, the cold shakes and the jakeleg. I can think about it now and feel bad" (26). As drunkenness sets in, the narrator conflates the dilapidated setting and the precarious physical states of the hard-

drinking men: “In this tall room, the cracked plaster sootstreaked with the shapes of laths beneath, this barrenness, *this fellowship of the doomed. Where life pulsed obscenely fecund.* In the drift of voices and the laughter and the reek of stale beer the Sunday loneliness seeped away” (23, emphases mine). This drunken fellowship reveals how the McAnally moonshine economy morphs into the alcoholic economy of suffering. J-Bone’s Early Times allows the men to get drunk on their own accord; they independently produce a spirit stronger than 3.6% beer, signifying a small measure of economic autonomy from what the local government allows. While they indulge, the fellowship increases in size and scope as other men join the fold and share exaggerated tales of their worst hangovers. No amount of convivial bottle passing hides the fact that instances like this exact a profound toll on the men, negating the symbolic value of the moonshine economy as resistance to the law. Each drunken narrative told by the Early Times crew contains more than trace amounts (3.6%) of suffering. Consider how the narrative articulates this irony—while drunken laughter fills the room, the narrator describes the men as “doomed,” which speaks both to the inevitable hangover awaiting them tomorrow (or worse, “dry heaves, the drizzling shits, the cold shakes and the jakeleg”) and their literal and figurative relocation as persons existing opposite the status quo. While the men cohere in a shared fellowship of drunkenness, they invariably participate in their own doom.

It is these peoples’ individual and collective alcoholisms that seal their long term fates. Granted, aberrant consumption carries with it legal consequences for all drinkers in Tennessee at this time, but the McAnally men do not merely drink. They drink alcoholically, and their compulsive consumption necessitates not only their participation in the moonshine economy but continued suffering through their diseased participation. Perhaps the most tragic exemplar of the alcoholic economy of suffering is Ab Jones. Ab doubly suffers in the South at midcentury. An

African-American who repeatedly confronts the bigoted white authorities and is a producer/consumer of illegal booze, Ab Jones finds himself subject to power structures that oppress both class and race. In addition to aberrant drinking, Ab's chosen resistance to his ideological opposition (most often, the Knoxville police) is through goading and violence. While his race and class preclude him from meaningful participation in the everyday economy, Ab betrays no effort to assimilate into society. His resistance to societal hegemony is nearly always fueled by drunkenness, symbolic of his choice to resist as well as his long term futility in doing so. Ab surrounds himself with others who do the same. One such person is Smokehouse who, in an effort to make money, throws himself into oncoming traffic in the hopes that he can sue unsuspecting drivers. Not surprisingly, his plan fails and he is badly injured. When Suttree asks him what he will do if he gets the money in settlement, Smokehouse responds, "Well ... Get drunk, I reckon. Least I wont have to sweep the floor for no niggers" (201). His response casts his societal resistance in the novel's restricting double-bind of the alcoholics who suffer. By refusing to do the menial work available to him ("sweep[ing] the floor for … niggers"), he concocts a foolish plan that causes him great physical pain. The potential resolution is grunt work or a settlement. There are no alternatives. Were he to win the settlement, his plans are simple yet telling: he will "Get drunk, I reckon." Contrary to Smokehouse, Ab's predicament is more serious in its perpetuity—he cannot seem to escape the social forces that bear down on him: "They dont like no nigger walkin around like a man, Jones said. He had drawn his bottle forth and unscrewed the cap and was taking a drink" (203). Resting in bed after suffering another beating by the police, the "scarred black face looked grieved" as Ab looks for a drink. He "was groping around in the near dark for something and finally came up with a bottle and unscrewed the cap and drank and put it back" (202).

Ab Jones personifies the alcoholic economy of suffering, since he is a marginal, disenfranchised black man in the South at this time. This protest, though, always accompanies excessive drinking and results in great suffering. Ab's race, class, and disease all inhibit the material windfall that might mitigate his despair. But Ab Jones is not the only character whose participation in the alcoholic economy of suffering produces a violent collision with social forces of progress. Perhaps the novel's most notorious alcoholic, Billy Ray Callahan attempts interaction with the modern world with no hope for success. Like Ab Jones, Callahan resists through drinking yet also succumbs hopelessly to alcoholism. Unlike Ab, however, Callahan is white, and while his skin color exempts him from racism, it makes him increasingly subject to the ironic traps of progress as he attempts to navigate the modern world through proper channels (i.e., a steady paying job). Suttree first encounters Callahan when both are incarcerated. Immediately, Callahan's alcoholism and his violent disposition are shown as intertwined. While in the jail, Callahan concocts fruit wine: "In a few days a yeasty orange wine would work up and he'd strain it off and invite friends to take a cup with him. They called it julep and it kicked and spewed in the stomach all night. Callahan would get slightly drunk and look about goodnaturedly to see was there thing or body worth destroying" (51). Throughout the novel, his own body is foremost destroyed.

As time passes, he seeks gainful employment, but he finds the modern economy, despite its myriad job opportunities, closed to him. Absent for much of the novel, Callahan resurfaces in his aimless navigation of a world outside of the alcoholic economy of suffering. His repeated failures project a fundamental dissociation between an alcoholic subsisting on the margins and the modern economy that is supposedly made available to him through progress. He leaves Knoxville to find work:

> Billy Ray Callahan labored for a while as a tilesetter but was fired for drinking. The crewchief stopped him coming from his lunchbreak and confronted him.
>
> You cant drink on the job and put in a day's work. You want to drink you can get your time now.
>
> The crewchief's name was Hicks. Callahan grinned at him. Why Hicks, he said, if I was you I wouldnt be caught without a drink of whiskey on my breath … so people would think I was drunk instead of just so damned ignorant (374).

Callahan's termination by Hicks illustrates more than a clash in personalities between employee and employer, instead reflecting a cultural shift speaking to the importance of economic efficiency in modern production. Andrew Barr notes how drinking on the job loses social sway as America industrializes: "The purpose of the workplace now lay solely in maximizing production; it had lost its social function. The social values of the workplace, and the drinking customs that had affirmed them, were transferred to the saloon" (376). As a man violently socialized in a marginal economy of alcoholic suffering, Callahan remains ignorant to the shifting values assigned to labor and drink. His violent alcoholic bouts follow him from place to place, and each successive failure further separates him from the genuinely opportunistic forces of progress. He seeks work in Atlanta, but the recurring cycle of drunken violence follows him. So long as Callahan remains a committed drinker and, thus, a player in the moonshine economy, the doors of opportunity are closed.

Finally, Callahan returns to Knoxville where, appropriately, "The last job [he] had was running a bootleg joint for a man named Cotton down off Ailor Avenue. Suttree saw him in Comer's and he looked subdued" (McCarthy 374). Callahan's being "subdued" injects an air of tragedy into the scene—his failures in the outside world weigh heavily on him, and perhaps he realizes that his mortal existence remains precarious. On the last night of his life, Callahan immerses himself into all that the alcoholic economy of suffering offers for men of his ilk. After indulging in some moonshine, Callhan and Suttree end up at the Moonlite Diner where Callahan

is shot in the face over stolen money. Of all the violence Callahan encounters throughout the novel, this one lacks the bombast and danger of all the others. This seems precisely the point, though—Callahan's attempt to assimilate into the modern world casts him tragically back into alcoholic purgatory where the moonshine economy breeds violent conflict and suffering. After Callahan endures rejection ("he looked subdued"), he now suffers. Suttree follows Callahan to the hospital.

> There's nothing we can do for that man, said the doctor.
> He's not dead, said Suttree.
> No, said the doctor. He's not dead (377).

The doctor's proclamation resonates profoundly here. Callahan is not dead but he soon will be, and his doomed place in the alcoholic economy of suffering suggests that there never *has* been anything "we can do for that man." Callahan soon expires, "The last visitor was an old black orderly, a gentle man who washed the stricken and the dead. He pulled back the gauze and unscrewed the top from a bottle of alcohol and poured it slowly down the hole into Billy Ray's brain" (377). Appropriately, another member of society's dispossessed, a black man, offers the salve to ease Callahan's suffering, though this is the only shred of dignity afforded the dying man. "He lived for another five hours and died sometime before daybreak unattended. They hadnt even taken off his shoes" (377).

The fates of Ab Jones and Billy Ray Callahan recast the symbolic value of the marginal economy from a space where society's castoffs drink in solidarity against the bourgeois status quo into something that induces suffering which, in the end, consumes them and prohibits assimilation into a productive, functioning modern economy. Jones and Callahan are not alone as victims in the alcoholic economy of suffering. As the novel progresses, the fates of marginalized drinkers become inextricably woven into their subordinate place relative to the modern economy.

As mentioned previously, Frye sees modern progress as affording the marginalized a modicum of opportunity, though this opportunity remains fleeting when "presented in the light of a stark and garish reality" (56). True to form, as the McAnally Flats moonshiners attempt to assimilate into the modern economy, they are expelled: "J-Bone was still in Cleveland. Others from McAnally gone north to the factories. Old friends dispersed, perhaps none coming back, or few, them changed. Tennessee wetbacks drifting north in bent and smoking autos in search of wages. The rumors sifted down from Detroit, Chicago. Jobs paying two twenty and hour" (McCarthy 398). The northern migration amounts to little more than forced community diaspora—major players united in the alcoholic economy of suffering hopelessly chase the work, leaving little in their wake. Those who remain appear worse off than ever, a toxic combination of poverty and addiction: "In the gutted rooms sad quaking sots are waking to the problem of the Sunday morning drink" (385), those like "Blind Richard [who] sits with his wife. The junkman drunk, his mouth working mutely and his neck awry like a hanged man's. A young homosexual alone in the corner crying. Suttree among others, sad children of the fates whose home is the world, all gathered here a little while to forestall the going there" (386).

Suttree's suffering is always related to the ways that alcoholics drink in reaction to the confusion inherent in the modern world. The examples of Jones and Callahan as sufferers show how two specific marginalized demographics (black/violent and white/violent, respectively) are affected by a confrontation with the oppressive forces of progress. While their race and class certainly mark them abjectly relative to the loci of power, their alcoholic drinking does as well, and the novel's overwhelming preoccupation with the McAnally populace and vigorous consumption suggests a deeper significance in this characterization related specifically to how alcoholism and addiction were perceived at this time. Addiction researcher William White

contends that addiction and class have been unfairly conflated to mark problem consumers as deviant. He states,

> When one examines the American rhetoric in which alcohol and other drug problems have been constructed, one is immediately struck by the fact that this rhetoric tends to become highly inflammatory during periods of great social conflict. The addiction rhetoric during these times is not so much about drugs as it is about groups of people linked to their use. Struggles between races and social classes and broader concerns about social disorder often get played out metaphorically in prohibitionist campaigns and "drug wars" (48).

It is again worth noting the historical context of 1950s Tennessee: Dry for reasons recalling rhetoric specific to the Temperance Movement. The race-class divide in the novel cleaves closely to the Wet-Dry one where society's affluent are characterized as temperate (or at least very moderate in their consumption), while the marginalized not only produce and distribute highly potent moonshined spirits but also consume them alcoholically. White continues, "We see here how an inflammatory rhetoric is mobilized as a weapon in the struggles between groups of people—conflicts that are first and foremost not about rituals of psychoactive drug consumption or their associated problems. The rhetoric of addiction in these contexts serves the broader function of reflecting, fueling, and sustaining these conflicts" (49).

What makes Suttree's whole quagmire significant relative to White's assessment is his purgatorial location relative to rich and poor. Suttree's participation in the alcoholic economy of suffering comes not from material necessity like the others but from a purposeful exile. His benders induce misery,[7] though his pain remains fundamentally different from the others

[7] Part of Suttree's exile—and clearly the part for which he feels the most guilt—is the abandoning of his wife and child sometime before the novel begins. After a violent and emotional confrontation with his former in-laws at his son's funeral, Suttree attempts to quell the pain with liquor: "Partway down the road he stopped and opened the bottle and drank.… Suttree turned across the lawn and went to the back of the church and sat in the grass and drank the whiskey. After he had drunk a little of it he began to cry. He began to cry harder and harder until he was sitting there in the grass with the bottle upright between his knees, wailing aloud" (McCarthy 159). The next morning, partly to address the hangover and partly to continue self-medicating, he drinks more: "It was about a third full and he unscrewed the cap and took a drink and shuddered and shook himself and then took another drink. Then he went out" (160).

precisely because he *chooses* the life of poverty. As mentioned earlier in response to Traber's criticism, this choice should not undercut the fact that Suttree's program remains authentic. However, because he will forever be linked to his former life of privilege, his role in the alcoholic economy is fundamentally different. Luce nicely articulates how Suttree's menial existence as fisherman nonetheless connects him to a (crude) modern economy[8] that marginalizes. She states, "If [Suttree] is somewhat redeemed by his charity in fish, cash, or favors to the poor of the city, he is nonetheless implicated in the capitalistic predation in his competitive marketing: he sells first to the white fishmonger, who will pay him more, and then offers the remnants to the black grocers for lower prices" (237). No amount of guilty class consciousness fully exempts him from participating in the modern economy that Mogelen identifies as having produced a profound sense of loss to its confused participants. What makes Suttree's predicament all the more problematic for someone who exists in purgatory searching for some sort of ontological clarity is his drinking. Luce continues, "Suttree often spends his fishing revenue on alcohol, miring himself in fleshless oblivion" (237). Where men like Reese, Ab Jones, and Callahan suffer from the moment of their unfortunate births, Suttree does so because he attempts to negotiate the fiscal and social economies while plagued by alcoholism.

The McCarthy critics who have engaged Suttree's drinking on any substantial level point to the destructive problems resulting from it. Two of these critics, William C. Spencer and

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[8] Luce refers to Suttree's foray into the Market Street open-air market. McCarthy describes Suttree's first stop as "the rows of derelict trucks piled with produce and flowers, an atmosphere rank with country commerce, a reek of farmgoods in the air tending off into a light surmise of putrefaction and decay" (66). Here, Suttree makes his initial transaction, selling two catfish and one carp (totaling roughly nine and one-half pounds) to Mr. Turner for $1.04. Only after having sold his best product does Suttree move to the outskirts "where loud and shoddy commerce erupted out of the dim shops into the streets and packs of scarred dogs wandered. Shouldering his way through dark shoppers in a market ripe with sweat and the incendiary breath of splo drinkers, wide white teeth and laughter and cupshot eyeballs" (68-69). Here, he sells his passed-over fish—"foteen pound" worth of buglemouth—to the "dark [black] butcher" for $1.12.

Dianne Luce, see Suttree's drinking as a central problem with which the protagonist contends to find existential equilibrium through his self-imposed exile. Spencer argues that Suttree's exploration of his own psyche is nearly always accompanied by an altered consciousness, the most common catalyst to this being alcohol. Referring to Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill W.'s fascination with William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Spencer suggests that "one avenue of altered perception that Suttree pursues is through drinking. Perhaps his intoxication is not intended just as an escape but may be a sign he is courting insight" (88). This booze-induced insight prefigures Suttree's "spiritual progress when at the end of the novel he transcends his dividedness and achieves a sense of unity" (89), something positive and essential to Suttree's program. While Spencer conceptualizes Suttree's excessive drinking as necessary to his ontological success, Luce is not as quick to glorify this consumption. Diverging from Spencer significantly Luce characterizes Suttree explicitly as "*an alcoholic* and soul-wounded man alienated from family, church, and twentieth-century American culture" (194, emphasis mine). Luce argues persuasively that Suttree's alcoholism symbolizes a problematic relationship between the protagonist and the materialism represented by his father. His disease becomes a "gnostic metaphor for the oblivion of the spirit," which renders him unable to transcend his modern purgatory so long as he drinks. Luce is correct in flagging Suttree's alcoholism as a hindrance to his social critique, though her pronouncing Suttree redeemed (or at least partially so) fails to account for other signifying factors that his (family's) alcoholism represents at midcentury. Both Spencer and Luce rightly judge Suttree's success at novel's end vis-à-vis his drinking, but neither recognizes the significance of his alcoholism as it relates to midcentury notions of class identity and the changing perception of how addiction (ingestion, literal consumption) affected material prosperity.

For Suttree, another alcoholic in a long line of family drunkards, postwar America truly represents a dismal space, since both facets of modern addictive consumption—that which is purchased and that which is drunk—continually haunt him. Lori Rotskoff states, that "[t]o recover from the malaise of addiction, one needed to go against the grain of consumer society, to master new forms of self-restraint. Indeed, the therapeutic response to alcoholism, epitomized by AA, offered an implicit critique of modern consumer culture in the 1940s and 1950s" (234). Rotskoff's critique meets resistance in Suttree, since he willingly "go[es] against the grain of consumer society" and offers "a [more than] implicit critique of modern consumer culture," yet continues to consume destructively. Suttree's self-exile raises two questions regarding how postwar alcoholism and postwar material excess might *not* actually be able to be subsumed under an A.A.-like paradigm promising therapy for alcoholic excess. First, how can destitute alcoholics go against the grain of society when their social class predicament disallows such overt protest? In other words, the drunks of the margins might possess the means to protest "consumer culture run amok," but the likelihood that their voices will be heard is slim. Second, how can Suttree's going against the cultural grain effectively critique materialism when his overconsumption of alcohol symbolically draws him back into the postwar American condition of consumption-ingestion as indicative of a culture that dangerously overconsumes? If sobriety "cures" one of society's overconsuming ills, then Suttree's inability to curb his drinking represents an obvious ideological contradiction to his entire program, requiring a reconsideration of whether or not his flight at the end of the novel indeed suggests a genuine overcoming of/solution to his existential estrangement from the modern world.

Much of this existential estrangement, I argue, stems from the ways that Suttree conceptualizes his problem drinking alongside notions of how alcoholism is perceived in general

at this time. Rotskoff states that "postwar Americans generally viewed drinking as a matter of individual choice and alcoholism as a matter of individual or familial concern" and that "cocktail rituals were woven into the fabric of the dominant culture, both absorbing and reflecting anxieties that accompanied such trends as consumerism, status-seeking, social conformity, and the bureaucratization of the corporate workplace" (210). Such drinking rituals came to represent what Rotskoff calls America's "alcoholic culture," the "diverse ways in which men and women used alcoholic drinks—and drinking rituals—to establish, renew or alter social bonds" (210). Alcohol's postwar ubiquity cast a more sinister shadow over the nation's accepted rituals of consumption, as alcoholic culture "understood as pathology, came to represent a host of other anxieties and problems permeating mid-twentieth century social and cultural life" (210-211). What became instantiated, then, was "the paradoxical nature of alcoholic culture—one that alternatively celebrated and denigrated the effects of alcohol" (228). For Suttree's family, the polarizing effects of the alcoholic culture exacerbate an already tempestuous relationship between his father's aristocratic ideals and his mother's family's precarious relation to the upper class. Alcoholism splits the Suttrees along familial lines traced by social class pedigree, thus making Suttree family critic and, at the same time, another example of a family alcoholic. The alcoholic cultural paradox is rendered most apparent in the early encounter between Suttree and Uncle John.

The conversation contrasts how social class informs the perception of alcoholic drinking at midcentury. Each of these men share the alcoholic birthright, though they remain sharply differentiated in terms of how their problem drinking is perceived by one another and, consequently, the outside world. The narrative focus on John's physical condition indicates the ravages endured by perpetual drunkenness:

> You're looking well, said Suttree. A tic jerked his mouthcorner.
> Well, thanks, thanks. Try to keep fit you know. Old liver not the best … Had an operation in the winter. I guess you didnt know.
> No.
> I'm pulling out of it, of course.
> Suttree could smell him in the heat of the little room, the rank odor of his clothes touched with a faint reek of whiskey. Sweet smell of death at the edges …
> I dont have a drink or I'd offer you one.
> The uncle raised a palm. No, no, he said. Not for me, thanks (16).

This exchange offers subtle insight into John's physical condition and how he is perceived by the family. Suttree's initial compliment ("You're looking well") is followed by the detail of the mouthcorner jerk. With McCarthy's deft understatement, this note suggests that either the compliment is disingenuous or that—by switching the possessive antecedent *his* to indicate John instead of Suttree—John exhibits symptoms of physical withdrawal from alcohol. John's reaction is telling: he reluctantly accepts the compliment ("Well, thanks, thanks") before immediately calling attention to the "old liver" in a rhetorical shift meant to out what Suttree must clearly be thinking (that, whatever the cause for the operation, John's drinking contributed in some way). Next, what else might John be "pulling out" of, but alcoholism, an obvious answer given that the narrative follows with the detail about the "faint reel of whiskey"? Finally, Suttree's dilapidated houseboat seems the last place for propriety, yet he would proffer a drink if he had one. John's demonstrative response of raised palm and repetitious "No" is meant to convince both Suttree and himself that he is indeed on the wagon.

But Suttree does not suffer fools (or drunks) lightly, particularly when they come from his family. John's intrusion not only shows the family's most deviant drunkard but comes to signify something more profound about Suttree's own relation to his father, as it symbolically characterizes his problem drinking. John's insecurity at projecting sobriety closely mirrors the insecurity he feels in relation to Suttree's family. John recounts an unaccepted invitation received

from Suttree's parents, explaining "I dont know… I didnt want to go out there … it's not that I dont get along with them really…" which Suttree bluntly interrupts, "You just cant stand them nor them you" (16). By unmasking the façade of family (dis)function, Suttree and John now speak candidly. The conversation continues,

> Well, he said. I dont think I'd go so far as to say that. Now of course they've never done me any favors.
> Tell me about it, said Suttree dryly.
> I guess that's right, the uncle said, nodding his head. He sucked deeply on his cigarette, reflecting. I guess you and me have a little in common there, eh boy?
> He thinks so (17).

"He" is Suttree's father, the malevolent unseen patriarch whose aristocratic airs of superiority empower Suttree to protest/critique more overtly the harmful class divisions being perpetuated by Knoxville's supposedly progress ethos. But what of them having "a little in common there"? Both Suttree and John have contentious relationships with Mr. Suttree, but the uncle-nephew through-line runs deeper, pointing instead to their shared alcoholism, which, during the novel's 1950s setting carries the stigma of class inferiority and material weakness.

Thus far, the conversation illuminates how John's alcoholism points to a complicated relationship between Mr. Suttree and the two men, linking them alcoholically. As the exchange continues, however, these initially-disparate threads of familial discontent entangle, and the tendrils of alcoholism and social class (dis)approval become inseparable. This alcoholic cultural confluence illuminates how alcoholism and societal clout in postwar America cannot co-exist, at least not here. The narrative reads,

> You know, [John] said, you and me are a lot alike.
> I don't think so.
> In some ways.
> No, said Suttree. We're not … That's his thesis. But I'm not like you (18).

The reason for Suttree's adamant denial here becomes clear: he refuses to adhere to any definition of self as dictated by his father. Drunk or pariah, Suttree and John cannot share commonality by his father's perception. Of course, Suttree can deny commonality, but this does not mean that he and John are fundamentally different, since both are alcoholics. It does not mean that they are similar either. They continue:

> The uncle narrowed his eyes at Suttree. No need to get on your high horse with me, he said. At least I was never in the goddamned penitentiary.
>
> Suttree smiled. The workhouse, John. It's a little different. But I am what I am. I don't go around telling people that I've been in a T B sanitarium.
>
> So? I don't claim to be a teetotaler, if that's what you're getting at.
>
> Are you an alcoholic?
>
> No. What are you smiling at? I'm no goddamned alcoholic.
>
> He always called you a rummy. I guess that's not quite as bad.
>
> I don't give a damn what he says. He can … (19).

The shifting etymological significance of alcoholism at midcentury is on full display here, both as a pejorative marker of social class (in)stability represented by those who drank problematically and for someone like Suttree who runs counter to the societal grain in his rebellion against modernity. Regarding the pejorative significance of "alcoholic," Suttree's stinging response to John's initial insult is delivered with perfect subtlety. Recall that inebriate asylums for addicts were commonly referred to euphemistically as "sanitariums" before such havens were culturally accepted as legitimate places for treatment of alcoholic "disease." Only when the disease paradigm of alcoholism became widespread did the need for euphemism disappear. The fact that John lies about the true reason for his hospitalization (alcoholism, not tuberculosis) suggests that he is either ashamed of his condition at a time when drinking had become socially accepted and assimilated into the culture (everyone else consumes without much trouble, yet he cannot exercise such restraint), or that public knowledge would further damage his family standing. Perhaps both. John's vehement denial when asked if he is an alcoholic

merely affirms what Suttree already knows: that his uncle is a drunk and that any continued effort to deny this in order to change outside (particularly for his father) perception is futile. In calling John a "rummy," Mr. Suttree replaces the rhetorical weight of "alcoholic" with a softer euphemism, though, again, Suttree's retort here exposes John's condition for what it is: the physiological and material signifier of family shame and embarrassment. John, like Ab Jones and Billy Ray Callahan, suffers from the wrong kind of overconsumption, rendering him a diseased and ineffective participant in the modern economy.

The difference between Suttree and John is the former's acceptance of his condition ("I am what I am") and the latter's denial of it. John allows the dominant class perception of his alcoholism to determine the course of his life. Suttree—suffering the same problem of addiction—does not. Again, class lines determine a great deal concerning how the family's alcoholic past is understood. Suttree says to John, "When a man marries beneath him his children are beneath him. If he thinks that way at all. If you werent a drunk he might see me with different eyes. As it is, my case was always doubtful. I was expected to turn out badly. My grandfather used to say Blood will tell. It was his favorite saying" (19). Finally, Suttree states the source of his father's distance from the rest of the family, though the notion of "blood" assumes weighted significance in light of the family's alcoholic past. Suttree correctly states that John's alcoholism taints Mr. Suttree's perception of his son, since alcoholism cleaves so closely to family lines. Thomas D. Young, Jr. states that the "aristocratic elder Suttree's contempt also apparently extends to the low breeding of his wife and her family, something he has remarked in both the alcoholic Uncle John and the near-alcoholic[9] Suttree as well" (Arnold and Luce 97). Also as previously stated, since midcentury material consumption became so closely associated with

[9] I contend that, although he differs in the amount of damage afflicted through years of alcohol abuse, Suttree, like Uncle John, is indeed an alcoholic.

ingestion, then the more penetrating significance of drinking negatively associates Suttree with the other half of the family tree. Mr. Suttree sees fit to disinherit his lot because he marries beneath his social class position, and this snobbery infects Suttree later on, as he admits ("If you werent a drunk he might see me with different eyes"). The "Blood will tell" comment further links Suttree's and John's estrangement from the family to alcohol, since problem drinking often passed from one generation to the next through blood. Thus, for the alcoholic like John, class affluence will always remain elusive, since, as Suttree says, "You think my father and his kind are a race apart" (McCarthy 19). So long as people adhere to class hierarchy, the class-consumption association will remain linked.

Because Suttree is no longer subject to his family's wealth and position, he, unlike John, is essentially freed from the pressures of hiding his alcoholism. This does not excuse his alcoholism as a continued hindrance to his personal and existential progress, however, and his problem drinking need be understood in all of its severity, something neither Spencer nor Luce do entirely. Again, Spencer identifies the problem that Suttree has with alcohol, yet he does not go far enough in his analysis. He states, "Significantly, and perhaps symbolically, Suttree first learns the suppressed secret of his stillborn twin from his alcoholic Uncle John, who revealed the information only because he was drunk. The discovery of this secret provides Suttree with his first clue as to the nature of his problems" (Spencer 89). True, much criticism addresses how Suttree's knowledge of a ghostly twin contributes to his obsession with death, but Spencer need not belabor the point here. The true "nature of [Suttree's] problems" as explicated in this scene deals with the family curse of alcoholism (specific to his mother's side), and as Suttree finds himself increasingly discontent with the blue blood existence promulgated by his father, his own situational purgatory becomes symbolized by his disease. The reality of Suttree's notorious

family drinking history comes into focus when he visits his Aunt Martha and Uncle Clayton. While leafing through a family photo album, Suttree makes the correlation between alcoholic drinking and social inferiority, a point further emphasized in Clayton's continued drinking throughout the scene. Nameless family antecedents are generally characterized for their abjection, "He was a drunk, he a grifter" (McCarthy 130). This family history suggests an established pattern of alcoholic descendants, which is confirmed in the conversation between Suttree (whom his family calls Buddy), Clayton, and Martha. Clayton begins,

> Why are you boring him with them old pictures for? You want a drink, Buddy?
>
> Why I'll bet Buddy don't even drink, do you Buddy?
>
> Oh no, Clayton said. Buddy wouldn't take a drink.
>
> Suttree grinned.
>
> Lord I raised some that will, said the old lady. I don't know where they get it at.
>
> At Ab Franklin's, said Clayton, grinning and pouring at the sink.
>
> I mean where they take after it from.
>
> Clayton pointed with the bottle toward the albums. Take a look at a few of them old hard assed sons of bitches in there and tell me if you think any of em ever took a drink.…You better have a little hair of the dog, Bud.
>
> No thanks (130-131).

Martha's naivete as to "where they get it at" does little to mask the notion that this side of the family inherited a propensity to drink along with having been socialized in an alcoholic culture at places like "Ab Franklin's" (It is difficult to imagine Mr. Suttree's family photo album populated with "hard assed sons of bitches"). Curiously, Suttree does not accept Clayton's hair of the dog offer. Why? A rejection of this offer out of any guilt or shame at his own place in the family line of alcoholics undercuts Suttree's earlier assertion to John that "I am what I am." Suttree's full rejection of family seemingly precludes any insecurity that the label "alcoholic" bears on his standing as a man from high social standing. Suttree's alcoholism signifies something much more complex than individual malady. Unlike John or Clayton (or Ab Jones and Callahan, for

that matter), Suttree's alcoholism possesses an unpredictability that eludes easy categorization, since his occupancy in Knoxville's literal and figurative liminal space effectively empowers him with the capability to transcend his suffering lot in the modern world (after all, he accepts the boy's offer of water at the end). However, such transcendence proves fleeting. The nature of Suttree's addiction proves deathly serious, rearing its ugly head in ways that threaten his life.

Suttree's drinking exemplifies his disconnect from the modern world and shows how alcoholic (over)consumption signifies the dangers in postwar excess. The narrative points to two facets of Suttree's consumption that require interpretation. As I mentioned above, his alcoholism has family precedent, recurring in such a way that dooms him to a life of problematic consumption. The other aspect worth mentioning is how Suttree drinks alcoholically. Although Suttree and his McAnally companions drink copiously throughout, there are several sustained binges that highlight the alcoholic consumption occurring regularly on the margins. For instance, after a morning spent peddling fish on Market Street, Suttree meets Callahan, J-Bone, Hoghead, and Boneyard at the Sanitary Lunch as they continue the bender from the night before. He joins them. J-Bone is "tryin to get well" and the crew consumes aggressively. "J-Bone had come up with a bottle from under the booth and was pouring whiskey over the ice, holding the glass in his lap and looking about cunningly," while Suttree repeatedly treats the men to "fishbowls" (71). The drinking escalates quickly: "On to other taverns where in the smoke and the din and the music the night grew heady" (75). Later on, Suttree "was looking down into a tin trough filled with wet and colorful gobbets of sick. Scalloped moss wept from a copper pipe. A man sat sleeping on the toilet, his hands hanging between his knees. There was no seat to the toilet and the sleeper was half swallowed up in its stained porcelain maw.… Suttree tottered into the corner

and vomited. The man at the trough watched him" (76). This level of inebriety is precursor to violence and pain.

Though all of his friends are dangerously inebriated, Suttree seems to be most adversely affected, the greatest liability to himself and everyone else. Somehow he continues, as the night's events become increasingly blurry: "He looked down. He was holding a jellyjar of white whiskey. He raised it and sipped" after which a "slatshaped negress" states "He too drunk" (78). Suttree's intoxication infantilizes him, as he loses bodily control:[10] "He must have been leaning against them because now he fell into the depths they had vacated, spilling the whiskey on himself" (78). The following passage details the extent to which Suttree loses control:

> Someone was helping him. He rose from a dream, a ragestrangled face screaming at him. He reeled toward the door. In the corridor he turned and made his way along to the rear of the house, caroming from wall to wall. A black woman stepped from out of the woodwork and came toward him. They feinted. She passed. He clattered into a bureau and fell back and went on. At the rear of the hallway he floundered through a curtain and stood in a small room. Somewhere before him in the dark people were breeding with rhythmic grunts. He backed out. He pulled at a doorknob. His gorge gave way and the foul liquors in his stomach welled and spewed. He tried to catch it in his hands (78).

The severity of Suttree's drunkenness relative to everyone else here deserves pause, especially since this establishment is clearly not a place of formal propriety or upstanding reputation. His condition stands out as the most dire. As one of the women caring for him aptly summarizes, "White motherfucker done puked everywhere" (79).

When he awakens, there is the hangover with which to contend. McCarthy details the physical pain of dehydration as well as the humiliation of excessive consumption: "He woke with the undersides of his eyelids inflamed by the high sun's hammering.… Suttree lay with his

[10] This scene recalls Gowan Stevens losing control of his faculties while enacting his "Virginia Gentleman" ritual with Goodwin and his crew in *Sanctuary*. Like Gowan Stevens, Suttree drinks with frightening severity, which not only marks him alcoholically and causes great personal harm on this night but continues to haunt him the next morning and beyond.

hands palm up at his sides in an attitude of frailty beheld and the stink that fouled the air was he himself. He closed his eyes and moaned.… His clothes cracked with a thin dry sound and shreds of baked vomit fell from him" (80). Beyond the physical damage done and the scene caused, there are other, more telling, consequences from the bender. Suttree's disheveled appearance captures the attention of patrolmen who arrest him. His condition is so wretched, however, that they call the paddywagon to take him in. Curiously, Suttree gives his name as Jerome Johnson, to which the officer responds, "We've had trouble with you before aint we Johnson?" (84). When he awakens sometime later, he asks for a bondsman. The turnkey answers that the inmate must stay locked up for at least six hours, to which Suttree replies, "I know. I was wondering if you'd check for me" (84). Because Suttree cannot make bail, the bondsman calls someone to pay on his behalf. Suttree instructs the bondsman,

> Tell them [the money is for] Suttree. But to ask for Johnson.
> You can get in a lot of trouble that way.
> I can get in a lot the other way (85).

Suttree's plan fails, since the men from whom he seeks money are themselves incarcerated. The conclusion to Suttree's first sustained drinking odyssey might be anticlimactic on its own—drunkenness, sickness, hangover, jail—if not for contextualizing how the episode foregrounds his alcoholism. Suttree's response to such concentrated consumption distinguishes itself from the others with whom he imbibes in its consequence. There is also the Jerome Johnson alias to reconcile. Suttree's knowing the routine (the requisite six hour lockup, for example), suggests that he has been in jail before, and the insistence that he be referred to as "Johnson" implies that his previous stint on the inside was quite recent. Furthermore, that operating under another name does not pose as great a threat as "the other way" (i.e., violating the terms of his probation),

means that the severity and/or frequency of previous transgressions would carry significant penalty were his present situation to be made known.

Overnight lockups and parole violations pale in comparison to the very real, very dangerous ways that alcoholism threatens Suttree's life. One bender nearly kills him. Having blacked out the night before, Suttree awakens inside a random car one morning. He and his other inebriated friends immediately begin drinking, embarking on a sustained binge. At nine o'clock in the evening they end up at the Indian Rock, a roadhouse filled with "lethal looking drunks" (186). When the inevitable fight breaks out (Suttree remains more of an observer than an active participant; that distinction goes to Callahan), Suttree is hit in the head with a floorbuffer: "The buffer rose trembling above the crowd. It came down on no head but Suttree's. He felt the vertebrae in his neck crack. The room and all in it turned white as noon. His eyes rolled up in the back of his head and his bowels gave way. He distinctly heard his mother say his name" (187). Suttree recovers in the hospital only long enough to sneak out when he feels able. When Suttree drinks, his ability to successfully navigate his purgatorial place in the modern world is compromised. More seriously, though—and speaking directly to the severity and harsh reality of his disease—is the fact that alcoholism exposes him to a new personal threat, self-annihilation. Indeed, Suttree's problems assume an added dimension when he drinks.[11] Clearly, he is no "semi-alcoholic," but a barely-functioning addict, and the only thing that distinguishes him from the other alcoholics is the fact that he actually survives in the end. As Callahan, Ab Jones, and countless others succumb to their conditions, Suttree escapes—just barely.

[11] His tempestuous relationship with the prostitute Joyce is constantly fueled by alcoholic binges: "Follow now days of drunkenness and small drama, of cheap tears and recrimination and half-so testaments of love renewed" (McCarthy 405). The relationship reaches critical mass after an alcoholic fit. Perhaps from bad moonshine or simply alcoholic psychosis, Joyce's drinking pushes her overboard: "One drunken Sunday morning at Floyd Fox's, a bootleg shack on a deserted stretch of Redbud Drive, she was taken with what seemed a kind of fit. She screamed at him half coherently and made weird gestures in the air, some threatening, some absurd. He tried to get her into the car. It had rained and they slid about and feinted in the click red clay while drinkers from McAnally or Vestal sat on crates or rusty metal chairs and watched" (409). The relationship ends soon after.

Any celebration of Suttree's escape must consider the fates of those who remain doomed to dispossession and acknowledge that Suttree, unlike Jack Burden or even Gowan Stevens, may not be recovered. Like the upper-crust that consumes at its own whimsy, Suttree ingests in a similar fashion, without anticipating (or understanding) the destructive ramifications of his addiction. The end of the novel does hint that Suttree might have overcome his addiction, though there remains no hope for the McAnally Flats populace as a marginalized whole or, as the deaths of Jones, Callahan, and others suggest, as a collection of individual addicts. Perhaps McCarthy's strongest societal criticism of overconsumption rests in the idea that too much booze destroys the body, even as the trash floating downriver suggests the same about material excess and the environment. The despair in such a metaphorical parallel exists here: one's liver gives way to alcoholism *long* before the bulldozed landscapes become oversaturated with suburban sprawl. Midcentury concepts of alcoholism conceived of the disease along lines of material excess; as postwar prosperity facilitated material possession, the postwar alcoholic culture questioned the long term sustainability of a paradigm encouraging quantity. If Suttree and the rest of the fringe alcoholics barely subsist among the shadows of material "progress," then his "individualist rebellion," as Traber laments, fails to sting as social critique. However, by placing these addicts in the alcoholic economy of suffering, McCarthy successfully critiques progress through their suffering; their bloated guts and whiskey'd breath project the dangers of modernization like a grotesque badge. As their shanties and speakeasies make way for motels and chain restaurants, Suttree goes forth presumably having attained Spencer's measure of clear consciousness whereby he (temporarily) conquers his fear of death. But where can he go and how successful will he be? Indeed, by accepting the boy's ladle, water—not alcohol—now courses through his veins. Perhaps he has suffered enough and has finally reconciled with the modern world that he

has so vehemently opposed. But there are (alcoholic) demons lurking in the shadows, "for I have seen [the hunstman's hounds] in a dream, slaverous and wild and their eyes crazed with ravening for souls in this world" (471). When the huntsman releases the hounds, Suttree might only see "Off to the right side" where "the white concrete of the expressway gleaned in the sun where the ramp curved out into empty air and hung truncate with iron rods bristling among the vectors of *nowhere*" (471, emphasis mine). Like the unfinished highway, Suttree's sobriety also remains in flux. When he looks back, "the waterboy was gone" (471), suggesting that the sobering water affirming his life is only of a fleeting supply.

Conclusion
"This can't be living": Post-Recovery in the Grit Lit South

Too much livin' is no way to die.

Son Volt, "Loose String"

After Suttree exits the scene, we are left to wonder how long his sobriety will endure. The destruction of McAnally Flats shows abounding change, and while this affords the South the opportunity to compete economically, it violently displaces the region's poor inhabitants without thought to their well-being. For Suttree, assimilating back into society means that he has temporarily conquered his alcoholic demons. But how long can he avoid the hounds? While Suttree's end flight inspires confidence that he will engage meaningfully in a world that he has long resisted, we remain skeptical. Any expectations for Suttree's success must be tempered with reality, especially as southern economic progress will continue to scar and bloat the landscape, calling into question the idea that abundance equals true prosperity. Educated and reared in privilege, Suttree is more likely to succeed in the modern world than his McAnally counterparts. Because he is an alcoholic, however, the potential for sobriety should be mitigated by midcentury understandings of how material abundance (and conspicuous consumption) parallels the harmful consequences of excessive drinking, thus making regional success a more precarious possibility. Personal recovery might be permanent, but this sobriety bears little on the South's social class disparity.

Suttree's personal crises stem from a particular southern upbringing that fails to account for social inequality, and by displacing himself among the McAnally Flats drunks he positions himself opposite the privileged white cultural space that he views with disdain. Like Cormac McCarthy, William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren also use the South's social disparity to critique what they perceive to be anti-progressive sentiment emanating from the region. Thus far,

I have shown how the southern understanding of and response to social progress in the modernizing South is better understood by how perceptions of alcoholism and recovery inform seminal historical moments. Prohibition, Repeal, World War II, and the post-war economic boom all represent versions of the South hesitating to engage with the rest of the nation-state in matters of change, and these instances of stagnation highlight how the major players in the region's social economy—white men—become increasingly uneasy with their drinking habits. As the disease concept of alcoholism compromises masculine southern cultural primacy, these men must now consider recovery as an alternative to their destructive consumption. Sobriety, in turn, signifies a broader, regional version of recovery: as southern drunkards dry out, their figurative space in the social economy might now be reimagined. Through the middle of the twentieth-century, disease and recovery act as the overriding metaphors through which to conceptualize whether or not the South can engage with the forces precipitating meaningful social change. As I have shown, sometimes this proves to be the case; at other times, it does not.

In addition to writing about and in response to history, Bill F. and Friends represent drinking in ways specific to their generational conceptions about alcohol, as each successive cohort, generally speaking, conceives of drinking differently relative to its distance from Prohibition. These writers, in varying ways, all use alcohol as the cultural signifier to critique their homeland's tepid (sometimes hostile) response to progress. Beyond merely describing the ways that their characters imbibe, the Friends of Bill F. further evolve the trope of the drunken southern man by aligning his drinking closely to current ideas about recovery. As I have shown, Faulkner, Warren, and McCarthy all present a South struggling with itself, as its social and political trajectory can no longer go unexamined amid the cacophonous din of progress all around. These writers portray disease and recovery through ways that speak beyond individual

sobriety; that is, southern drinking and recovery become useful metaphors to engage in discourse about how regional stagnation penetrates the cold depths of a South content to stall in the waters of progress. To recover in their South is to turn a collective gaze forward.

Where to go from here? This project's sensitivity to history/chronology and the evolving sense of alcoholic disease/recovery lends itself to an endless continuum; as the South struggles to change alongside the evolving nation-state, new models of progress (or lack thereof) present themselves. Alcohol and drinking continue to occupy loaded cultural space in the South and the greater nation-state. As A.A. solidified itself as the most successful treatment for alcoholism by midcentury, the disease of addiction continued to undergo broader cultural revision despite this popularity. Just because treatment was available and accepted did not mean that addiction was no longer stigmatized. Indeed, no matter how popular A.A. became as the salvation for bottomed-out alcoholics, addiction still carried with it the idea of weakness and uncontrollability for the individual. Addicts remained societal aberrations. But the waning decades of the twentieth-century changed this, beginning with several political milestones that pushed addiction into the public eye,[1] all of which helped demystify the deviant figure of the addict. The 1970 Comprehensive Alcoholism Prevention and Treatment Act—known as the Hughes Act—made alcoholism a public health concern in its creation of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The NIAAA's primary task was to develop a "program of alcoholism research, education, and training, and of establishing a national network of alcoholism prevention and treatment centers" (White 266). Iowa Senator Harold Hughes, chair of the Senate's Subcommitee on Alcoholism and Narcotics, was himself a recovered alcoholic, and Bill Wilson also publicly supported the measure (265-266). With well-known faces to front the bill,

[1] I provide a couple of examples. For richer context and more detail, see William L. White's *Slaying the Dragon*, pages 263-287.

the Hughes Act marked "the political coming-of-age of the invisible army of recovering and non-recovering people who had toiled as the foot soldiers of the 'modern alcoholism movement'" (266). With federal support for addiction treatment, stigma began to wane.

Not only did the stigma dissipate but treatment actually came into vogue, as addicted politicians and celebrities alike were emboldened to seek treatment and communicate this to the public. This lent credibility to the modern alcoholism movement, but it also diluted the message. William L. White states that "there was something superficial about this growing cultural acceptance of the alcoholic—a social veneer reflecting an intellectual acceptance of the idea of alcoholism as a disease, which served to hide the enduring emotional stigma attached to alcoholism and the alcoholic" (278). Despite the cheapening commodification of alcoholism, "it looked as if the battle to destigmatize addiction was being won" (278). Inevitably, the backlash arrived, first in the form of President Ronald Reagan's zero tolerance policy on drugs and then in a broader attack on the validity of alcoholism-as-disease from the scientific community.[2] The repercussions from zero tolerance were varied and complex, and by identifying alcoholic "myths," opponents of the movement "received considerable public press and triggered a more critical evaluation of the treatment industry and its pronouncements" (284). Furthermore, opponents managed to sway opinion against the financial support from the federal government. The more forgivable perception of alcoholism changed further with the founding of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in 1980. The group's fervent advocacy lobbied successfully for

[2] According to White, Herbert Fingarette's *The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease* (1989) and Stanton Peele's *The Diseasing of America* (1989) attempted to debunk the myths of alcoholism. Some of their claims include: "The concepts of 'loss of control' … and 'craving' … are myths unsupported by scientific research."; "Alcohol problems do not inevitably self-accelerate into advanced stages of alcoholism. Approximately one third of people with alcohol problems experience a lessening or complete diminishment of such problems. As a result, treatment programs claim success for what is often a natural recovery process."; Finally, "'It has been remarkably hard to find systematic proof that treatment for alcoholism and other addictions *accomplishes anything at all*'" (White 284).

stricter penalization of drunk drivers, as well as a more uniform codification of "legal" definitions of drunkenness (298).

I provide this historical thumbnail to show how perceptions of addiction continued to change, even decades after A.A. was formed. What I wish to emphasize is that drinking—specifically addicted drinking—remained a weighted cultural signifier. In other words, drinking still registered *something* deviant, complicated, and at times, conflicting about individual and region alike. The aforementioned cultural and historical moments inform one categorical subset emerging from South's next generation[3] of white men. Bill F. and Friends have company at the bar. But these writers are of a different ilk entirely, regardless of generation, for they are all of a type identified as members in the school of Grit Lit,[4] a term coined by Harry Crews and described by Tom Franklin as "the dirty South seen without romanticism or the false nostalgia of *Gone with the Wind* fans" (viii). Harry Crews, Larry Brown, and Lewis Nordan are all southern writers whose perspective and content focus on the plights of rural working-class whites. Alcoholic drinking among Bill F.'s Grit Lit friends is so pervasive that it becomes naturalized, dissolved into the narrative cocktail in such a way that, without it, something would be amiss. Note how the narrator of Larry Brown's "Falling Out of Love" recounts his drinking as casually as he might any mundane thing: "I opened that beer and took a long cold drink of it, then lit a cigarette, and the world didn't seem nearly as bad then" (9). Later, "I sat there and drank beer for a while, smoked cigarettes," before driving the broken down car on two flat tires: "It was such a

[3] Larry Brown is of the next generation; however, my inclusion of Harry Crews and Lewis Nordan, contemporaries of Cormac McCarthy, complicates this notion a bit. I address this below.

[4] I am not suggesting that every southern writer of this generation is of the Grit Lit subset; only that these writers offer provocative representations of drinking that relate importantly to the alcoholic working-class ethos of the characters.

good idea I couldn't figure out why I hadn't thought of it before … The thought came to me that I might be ruining the tires, but I just got another beer out when that thought hit me" (10).

In the novels examined thus far, alcohol acts as some forbidden fruit—the cast of *Sanctuary* drink it illegally; Stark recklessly slurps from Irwin's aged stash; Suttree and his crew consume in ironic parallel to the ostentatious material consumption of the South's affluent. In the Grit Lit world, drinking is simply part of the day. This is not to say that drinking is always portrayed comically—far from it—only that the morally loaded (good-bad, right-wrong) polarity to it has effectively disappeared. After all, who can judge these Grit Lit alcoholics when everyone drinks? An important distinction between Grit Lit consumers and those examined previously is that they are all of a particular social and economic rank. What complicates the distinction between Grit Lit writers and the Friends of Bill F. is that they are not necessarily of the next generation of southern authors using alcohol to critique social progress. While the texts I will discuss from Larry Brown and Lewis Nordan are published after *Suttree*, Harry Crews' *A Feast of Snakes* precedes it. The Grit Lit group does not represent a completely separate generation from McCarthy's, but its rural location does give it a unique—and distinct—version of alcoholic drinking. Although generations overlap between McCarthy and Crews/Nordan, I argue that these writers are informed by different contexts that render addiction in significantly altered ways. Thus, my consideration of these writers is only a slight shift in generation but a seismic shift in social class. Matthew Guinn argues that these writers should be grouped *after* southern modernists, a location that appropriately positions them beyond their literary predecessors. And as the destitute of McAnally Flats show, who exists *beyond*, but the poor and marginalized? There exists no moralizing in the drinking world of Grit Lit precisely because there is no privileged social position from which to judge. Guinn states "that the problem facing

the contemporary southerner is not the rejuvenation of history, but what to make of a diminished thing" (xv). As I will show, drinking is hardly diminished here, especially among working-class southerners whose gritty South was never anything *but* diminished.

Rampant, violent alcoholism abounds on these gritty margins, and Guinn sees a direct relationship between the lower-class rank of these writers and their characters' propensity to act self-destructively. Guinn notes that "Situated between the poverty of their origins and the middle-class Zeitgeist of the Sun Belt South, their upwardly mobile progression exemplifies [Allen] Tate's notions of the interstice between two cultures. Their naturalistic[5] vision stems from the uncertainty of this condition" (xiii). Guinn's language serves our purposes well, since these writers' condition speaks not only to their suspended location between cultural interstices but also to their alcoholism. As hardened, working-class drinking men, these writers and their characters are so imbued in a culture of consumption that they become, I suggest, almost beyond recovery. Part of their predicament lies in the claustrophobia of their geographical location; with the exception of Lewis Nordan in his memoir, none of the characters escape the poor rural South. With little concrete reference to the greater nation-state, these drinkers have a different sense of progress writ large than their literary antecedents. Gone are the intimations of the South's unwillingness to participate in large scale change. Instead, as Guinn notes, Bill F.'s Grit Lit friends critique their homeland in the very nature of the subject matter; that is, writing from the perspective of poor white trash, the pervasive socio-economic state of being. In this sense, alcoholic drinking becomes divorced from its function as metaphor for regional recovery. However, there remains the authorial preoccupation with drinking, like Bill F. and Friends, that

[5] Guinn clusters these writers as "naturalists" rather than modernist, because, "[l]ike the first American naturalists, they reflect the ominous social tensions of an evolving culture" (xiii).

signifies something about how alcoholism and social progress intersect, even if the allusions to regional recovery are scant.

In my concluding look at southern literary representations of alcohol and drinking, I argue that these Grit Lit texts gesture toward a post-recovery South. Where Faulkner, Warren, and McCarthy are preoccupied with how the South acts in or out of accordance with the rest of the nation-state, these Grit Lit writers turn inward and examine a regional subset shut off from the larger world. Beginning with Harry Crews before moving to Larry Brown and, finally, Lewis Nordan, I show how, as a signifier of the cut-off lives of poor white trash, drinking is understood, a given and, thus, less tied to the metaphorical function it has served in the texts analyzed thus far. As Guinn notes below, these writers conceptualize the notion of progress differently than their literary predecessors; because their authorial concerns lie within the insulated margins of the poor, white, rural South, their appropriation of drinking does not parallel the use of Bill F. and Friends. Similarly, the horrific excess with which these characters consume suggests that there is no reprieve from their affliction, which means that they cannot count themselves among the Friends of Bill W. either. These voices initially struggle to conceptualize alcoholism, which necessarily makes recovery all but impossible, since they do not know from what to recover. What becomes apparent is that alcoholism in their South will not be remedied, rendering the hopelessness of southern rural existence into perpetuity.

Harry Crews provides a useful starting point to examine alcohol and drinking in the post-recovery Grit Lit South, as his career preceded and influenced many who followed (particularly Larry Brown). The blue-collar perspective of Crews and others offer another view of the South vis-à-vis progress, one departing from the entrenched Agrarian North-versus-South tensions: "[T]he intrusion of progress … criticizes, from inside the region, the iconic rural South of the

Nashville group. Rather than being attacked from foreign quarters, the Agrarian ideal is today being assailed by the sons and daughters of southern culture orphaned by its elitist character" (Guinn 5). From the dirty margins, criticism of the region is directed not at an outside intrusion of progress (i.e., the social forces emanating from the North), but rather at the gentrified South glorified by the Agrarian ideal. Grit Lit alcoholics may drink like Gowan Stevens, but they do not look like him. Crews's 1973 novel *A Feast of Snakes* shows a very different South than the one imagined by the Agrarians. A brief plot summary: the protagonist, Joe Lon Mackey, is a former high-school all-American football player who never makes it to college due to his illiteracy. Two years removed from high school, he runs his father's (Big Joe) local grocery store, which profits mainly from bootlegged and stolen liquor. Miserable in his marriage to the rotten-toothed Elfie, he drinks alcoholically and abuses her in addition to neglecting his two young sons. Joe Lon obsesses over his high school girlfriend Berenice—now a college student at Georgia—and their previous sexual exploits. His immediate family life is dire as well. Joe Lon's sister Beeder lives with Big Joe, having lost her mind after witnessing their mother's suicide. Buddy Matlow is the corrupt cop, himself a former college football all-American and wounded Vietnam War vet. The action takes place over the weekend of the town's annual Rattlesnake Roundup. Joe Lon sulks in a jealous, drunken rage when Berenice brings her college boyfriend home. As the drinking escalates, so too does the hysteria emanating from the rapt throng of invading tourists visiting for the Roundup. Finally succumbing to his hopeless situation, Joe Lon snaps, killing the snake charming preacher and Berenice before he is thrust into the snake pit.

Wrapped up in Joe Lon's desperation is the fact that he drinks alcoholically to ease his pain, which only encourages his violent and compulsive behavior. In Crews's South, drinking is so normalized that it exists without any acknowledgement of the possibility of recovery, as there

is no real sense of from what one *can* recover. Alcoholism remains unnamed and unidentified, despite its rampant contagion. With the exception of *Sanctuary*, each of the booze-soaked texts written by Bill F. and Friends acknowledges some salvation from self-destructive drinking. Not so here. Consider how Joe Lon's consumption is nearly always cast alongside a pall of desperation and self-hatred. When the novel opens, he drinks whiskey while watching the cheerleaders practice: "He'd been drinking most of the day, but he didn't feel drunk … He was preoccupied by the thought of going home to Elfie and the babies, that trailer where he lived in a constant state of suffocating anger" (Crews 8). His self-loathing is made worse from drinking and an increasing awareness of his lack of social value. He thinks, "Is everbody in college but me? How the hell did I get left our here taking care of chemical shitters and dealing nigger whiskey?" (85). His frustration stems, I suggest, from his inability to identify his depression and his alcoholism: "*What is this I'm doing? I'm a grown man with two babies and a wife and I'm out here fucking around … What the hell ails me?*" (101). Cut off from the rest of the world, Joe Lon fundamentally lacks the means to answer this question. In fact, the answer given as "[s]omething was tearing loose" (109) in him is more alcohol. His friend offers the only available remedy: "'we'll press a little beer to you face, you'll feel better'" (102).

The absence of recovery language in the novel is striking, particularly given the ubiquity of alcoholic drinking. Joe Lon lacks the vocabulary to name his condition, though he clearly recognizes that something is wrong beyond his control. Alcoholism pervades, though it is never identified as such. Part of the absence of a diagnosis stems from the fact that Mystic, Georgia is isolated from the rest of the world, something Guinn acknowledges: "Like the 'freak' characters for which Crews is notorious, the grit emigres struggle with anxiety of separation and dislocation … This struggle is often abortive, for in the absence of cultural antecedents as guides to

behavior, the emigres lack the order of a familiar community" (14). Guinn's observation speaks to the outrageous—yet unchecked—behavior from nearly everyone in the novel; there is no order to the chaos until Joe Lon commits murder. But Mystic's "absence of cultural antecedents" also precludes useful knowledge of the consequences of alcoholism. Even Berenice's father, the town physician, remains clueless as to what really afflicts the community: "'When I retire I plan to devote my life to *belles lettres* … But for now, I have to keep this county as healthy and wholesome as modern medicine will allow'" (Crews 134). His intentions are good, but when all of the drunken forces converge and Mystic explodes in violence, Dr. Sweet proves ill-equipped to heal "what the hell ails" the community (Sweet faints when Buddy Matlow arrives at the house, mortally wounded in a failed attempt to rape Lottie Mae. Matlow dies.).

Crews's omission of any reference to sobriety does not necessarily mean that he is unaware of the Recovery Movement. Rather, it implies that in his gritty South, such recovery is simply unavailable, for, if as Guinn suggests, Crews and others are contemplating "what to make of a diminished [South]," then progress is futile. Joe Lon and others cannot grasp the idea of self-improvement because they do not know what they do not know. For many of Mystic's hard drinkers, alcohol placates enough anxiety to stave off the self-reflection that dooms Joe Lon. Joe Lon tastes enough of the outside world (Berenice's experiences in college, for example) to sense that something is wrong. For him, the convergence of alcoholism and depression cannot hold back the inevitability of self-destruction, as "he knew and accepted for the first time that things would not be different tomorrow. Or ever. Things got different for some people. But for some they did not" (170). With a helpless prognosis for an addiction that demands more booze to ease his malaise, the only recourse is suicide.

Larry Brown's work is heavily influenced by Crews (he dedicates one of his books to Crews), and, like his mentor, he depicts a gritty South where alcoholism is commonplace. Reflecting on critical reception to his work, Brown states that "'more than a few [reviewers] seem to register a certain uneasy feeling, and I wonder if this is because I make them look a little too deeply into my characters' lives. Maybe I make them know a little more than they want to about the poor, or the unfortunate, or the alcoholic" (qtd in Guinn 37). Unlike Crews, Brown at least mentions alcoholism by name, though in his short story collection *Big Bad Love* (1989), such recognition means little relative to recovery. In fact, recovery for the individual addict seems an even more fleeting concept given the first-person narrative of the stories. Similar to Jack's B.'s alcoholic narrative in *All the King's Men*, Brown's narratives are self-referential, which makes the dearth of recovery language more troubling for the addict. While his characters easily articulate their alcoholism, any reprieve from it remains submerged under countless alcoholic blackouts and depression. Brown's work does not contain elements implying that his characters seek or are even aware of sobriety as a means to cure what ails them. However, unlike Crews, Brown writes about alcoholic writers who trace the descent of their lives alongside repeated alcoholic benders. This self-reflexive turn is essential to his conception of alcohol and drinking. Brown represents alcohol and drinking as so entrenched that "conventional" recovery—i.e., sobriety—remains difficult, if not impossible to attain. As with Jack Burden, the very *telling* of the story—in a different and less "recovered" way—acts in some measure as a surrogate for recovery. Brown's characters live hard and dangerous lives, but in some cases (most notably Leon Barlow in "92 Days") are rescued by the trope of writing. To write from and about the poor white southern margins is to articulate an existence inseparable from alcoholism. Sobriety might be elusive, but other measures of temporary salvation are not.

Brown's rural South, like Crews's Mystic, Georgia, exists in isolation from urban spaces. His characters are free to drink and roam the rural Mississippi countryside, a setting subtly affected by the historical moment of the text's production. While the characters consume in self-destructive ways that give little stress to current trends in the modern alcoholism movement (see above), their drinking behavior is influenced by the times (1970s and 1980s). A brief moment with several characters and plotlines illuminates the context of Brown's Grit Lit alcoholism nicely. In "Wild Thing," the narrator observes "I had some beer iced down in the trunk. They got a crazy law in this county. You can't go in a store and buy cold beer; you can only buy it hot. So you have to get a cooler and keep it in the car. You have to always be thinking ahead" (34). At play here are Blue Laws similar to those affecting Suttree's Knoxville in the post-Repeal years. Ostensibly meant to discourage immediate consumption, warm beer amounts only to a minor obstacle here. In fact, it seems to encourage hazardous consumption; Brown's drinkers need a fix, and the truck ride from the store provides the perfect time to ice the beer. This results in drinking and driving, a recurring trope throughout *Big Bad Love*. The narrator of "Big Bad Love" subsists on mobile drinking, and his alcoholism makes this consumption all the more dangerous in the sheer number of beers consumed. Contemplating how to dispose of his dead dog, the narrator drives the country back roads and drinks. "By the time I'd gone about a mile I'd finished half of that one. I knew it would take more than one half-hot Old Milwaukee…. I would have loved to've had about a cold six-pack iced down, and about ten dollars work of gas in my truck. I could have rode and rode and drank then" (51). Typical of alcoholics, one drink leads quickly to another, and "I knew I had that six-pack to drive me all the way home" (52). While the narrator cannot limit the drinking to a legal (driving) level, he is acutely aware of the threat of a DUI, as evidenced in his estimating his blood-alcohol level: "I had put away about eight

beers by that time. My blood alcohol content was probably in the .10 range" (57). The inability to actually name his affliction contrasts his awareness of the legal repercussions of driving under the influence. Recall that MADD came into being in the early 1980s alongside a shifting national perception of alcoholism that saw the afflicted, in cases like these, as societal problems. The result in Brown is an increased mindfulness of drinking and driving with no mind paid to the alcoholism that precipitates it.

Without channels offering recovery from alcoholism, these characters remain subject to their disease, unable to recover properly from it. Compounding their misery is the societal stigma attaching itself to unrecoverable alcoholics at this time. By casting alcoholism as a social menace, its victims become deviant in their consumption, dangers to themselves and, more importantly in the mind of the broader body politic, society as a whole. DUI checkpoints indicate a societal awareness of drunk drivers, but in isolated rural spaces the stops provide more of a means to capture drunks than to rehabilitate them. What compounds these alcoholics' aberrant status is their un-nameable, unidentifiable misery. Like Joe Lon Mackey, these characters attempt to articulate the contours of the despair without having the vocabulary to do so. What they can state, however, is that their lives are dismal. Consider the following sentiments: Lonnie, the narrator of "The Apprentice" states, "This can't be living. I drink too much Old Milwaukee and wake up in the morning and it tastes like old bread crusts in my mouth" (15); the "Wild Thing" narrator notes that "It was a hard life, and I didn't know if I was going to be able to keep on living it" (41); another admonishes his bad luck in life, "What I figured was it was a unique problem but not quite out of line with the rest of my life. It seemed for some reason or another I had always been given the short end of the stick" (56). These lamentations share a tragic quality. Since none entertain ever truly emerging out from under their situations, the unwillingness or

inability to locate the central source of their alcoholic misery casts their lives as tragically unrecoverable. Leo, the narrator of the war story "Old Soldier," comes closest to understanding something beyond a life marred by alcoholism, though the only thing he can do is hope: "I thought about being old, and alone, and drunk and needing help. I knew I might be like that one day. I thought about having to turn to somebody for help. I hoped it would be there" (104).

Big Bad Love is filled with first-person narrators desperately seeking a way out of their menial existences, and the collection's concluding novella, "92 Days," provides the best example of the rural southern subset drinking itself into oblivion. Leon Barlow introspectively narrates the miserable course of his life over 92 days. An aspiring writer (one cannot help but draw the obvious parallel between Leon Barlow and Larry Brown), Leon barely subsists on day labor wages that keep him afloat long enough to make his way creatively. His artistic drive seems the only positive aspect of his life—his ex-wife hates him and hounds him for more money; his young daughter dies of SIDS; and he cannot escape the cycles of violence and death among those with whom he carouses. On top of all this, Leon's alcoholism becomes increasingly debilitating, a fact that surfaces in his self-reflection. While Leon refuses to abandon hope that he will someday be published and that the fractures in his personal and professional lives will heal, the outlook for his long term survival appears bleak.

Although these Grit Lit writers give voice to a southern subset effectively separated from the rest of the populace, Guinn sees Brown's fiction as addressing a more tenable connection between rural and urban: "The plight of Brown's poor characters demonstrates to whom the intrusions of modernity posed a threat and how the traditions of a stable community can operate to the detriment of its disenfranchised members" (36-37). For Leon, though, "the intrusions of modernity" remain an unseen and unknowable force. The closest he comes to articulating this is,

not surprisingly, when drinking: “I drank four or five beers and thought about the unfairness of everything” (Brown 147). Sustaining Leon through “the unfairness of everything” is hope that the encouraging letters received from publisher Betti DeLoreo will finally yield results. Her support remains Leon’s only true connection to the outside world. Of course, even if his work is accepted, his tribulations will not be remedied; moreover, his focus on the satisfaction that publication would bring speaks to both desperation and shortsightedness. A published short story will not pay the bills or repair a broken family. Compounding the potential ramifications of Leon’s situation is his alcoholism, which becomes a hindrance and a crutch to his writing process. Leon says, “I needed something to drink while I worked. It seemed like the harder I tried, the worse things became. I wondered how other people dealt with it. I tried to bury myself in my work, forget my feelings and my shortcomings and my fears and the sick weak hangovers that accompanied a night of writing and drinking” (157). This sentiment touches on the desperation in Leon’s predicament: if working is all that keeps him from oblivion and this work is fueled by alcohol, then how will he ever improve? Leon identifies that something is horribly wrong, but he does not see how this is connected to his drinking. Like Joe Lon Mackey’s “*What the hell ails me?*” introspection, Leon also feels something. How much hope can there be for recovery for the alcoholic who simply *does not get it*?

But things get worse, as Leon straightforwardly documents his steady decline without identifying himself as an alcoholic: “I got drunk one night. Actually several nights in a row and it scared me. When I came to, I believed I had been on a ‘running drunk’ for two days. It was the first time that had ever happened to me, and I’d always said it never would. Now I had done it, and it hadn’t seemed that hard” (175). Eventually the alcohol affects the work, as “I was drinking

more and writing less" (200). After a blacked out car accident where his two companions, Jerome and Kerwood White, are killed, the drinking escalates.

> I tried to write two other poems, about Jerome and Kerwood White, while I was drunk, but they were no good either. I rode around drunk, walked around drunk, slept and woke up drunk. I wrote drunk, ate drunk, washed my hair drunk. I watched television drunk as a boiled owl. I went over to Monroe's house drunk one day to see him while he was at work and his mother didn't appreciate it worth a damn. I knew better. It was just that drunk had done me in… (205-206).

Amid a depression of alcoholic despair, he finally bottoms out: "I put my face in my hand, and I cried, and promised myself that I would try to do better, for me, for everybody, for the kids especially. I hoped the promise would last" (208).

Recovery would seem the next logical next step for Leon, but in Brown's South no such thing exists, at least not in a manner facilitating sobriety. The closest he comes to sobriety is acknowledging that "I'd have to sober up sometime and clean it up" even though "I wasn't ready yet" (205). Again, what complicates Leon's potential recovery is his unawareness of it as a remedy for his depression. Furthermore, the writing and the drinking are symbiotic; each encourages the other, while providing some measure of relief from his miserable life. Therefore, if he cannot write or drink, then he has nothing. After his bottom-out, "I decided to write interesting stories about [the drunks at the bar], stay home, drink less. But when I got to writing all those drinking stories, it made me want to get drunk myself while I was writing them" (208). Leon will never stop drinking. However, this does not change the fact that, as long as he writes, he feels temporary salvation from his situation. The violent fallout from his benders merely proves to be the necessary consequence for his booze-fueled craft, alluding to whether or not "recovery," as related to alcoholism, is something that he actually needs. As Guinn suggests, Brown's characters are indeed "disenfranchised" to such an extent that conventional notions of therapy and recovery prove irrelevant to their true societal disease: abject poverty. As McCarthy

shows, Suttree escapes only because he *can* and not necessarily because he is more predisposed to curing his affliction. In a similar way, Leon seems doomed to remain inside the rural community. But without knowing about the nature of his disease or the outlets providing recovery, Leon is not any worse. It is difficult to imagine a sober, healthy life for him, but it is likely that he will be published. Does this suffice as recovery from alcoholism or a meaningful engagement with the forces of progress from outside? Hardly, though his menial existence does provide the material for "touching the hurt in people, trying to" (146). This sets Brown apart from Crews. Where Joe Lon succumbs to the desperation of not knowing "*what the hell ails me*," Brown's characters are able to name their plight. And although articulating "alcoholism" as an unrecoverable condition does not imply recovery, perhaps writing about it does. By giving his narrators the reigns to articulate suffering in their own words, a confession of sorts occurs that positions them relative to other poor white southerners. This drunken brotherhood will never find alcoholic recovery, but Leon at least locates one remedy to mediate his suffering.

Lewis Nordan is another in the tradition of Crews and Brown, though unlike them, two of his works—the loosely autobiographical short story collection *Music of the Swamp* (1991) and his memoir *Boy with Loaded Gun* (2000)—deal explicitly with alcoholism (named as such) and recovery from it. The overt references to the disease and sobriety complicate my argument that Grit Lit writers show a South that is all but beyond recovery. However, Nordan's sobriety is precarious enough a concept that it should be questioned as something sustainable in the long term. Nordan's inclusion here is unique because he uses two different texts (and two genres) to explicate what seems a sustained alcoholic narrative, the former detailing his father's futile attempts at sobriety and the latter tracing his own plight and ultimate recovery. In both *Music of the Swamp* and *Boy with Loaded Gun*, Nordan channels his impressionable childhood

consciousness through first-person accounts of his father's hopeless bouts with alcoholism (Sugar Mecklin is the narrator in *Music*). His father suffers from much of the same alcoholic despair as Joe Lon Mackey and Leon Barlow, though his drunkenness is mostly void of violence and infidelity. What I am interested in with Nordan is not the drinking itself and the hopelessness it breeds but in how he, as a Grit Lit writer, conceives of recovery in ways that are importantly distinct from Bill F. and Friends and speak to the merely fleeting success that recovering alcoholics can achieve on the margins.

Nordan's collection *Music of the Swamp* is comprised of interrelated short stories tracing Sugar Mecklin's childhood growing up with an alcoholic father, whom he loves but recognizes as being deeply troubled. The frequency of drinking here is so entrenched in the rural South that it is never overtly problematized as something necessarily "wrong." Like many other men of Arrow Catcher, Mississppi, Gilbert Mecklin drinks alcoholically, and while this enacts a heavy toll on his own mind and body (not to mention the impressionable young Sugar who later becomes an alcoholic), Gilbert's attempt at sobriety proves equally disrupting to familial relations. Despite the fact that drinking compromises Gilbert's health, such imbibing still confers an inherent sense of masculine self-identity that, in a sense, excuses the embarrassing fallout of sobriety. Like Brown, Nordan assigns deviant status to problem drinking, though he complicates this stance in the reaction from both Sugar and his mother to Gilbert's temporary sobriety.

Sugar's narration demonstrates the consequences of his father's alcoholism as a means to contemplate the circumstances leading to his own descent into alcoholism. He articulates how the tragedy befalling his father relates to drinking. In "Music of the Swamp," Sugar observes,

> Gilbert Mecklin was just this minute saying to himself, he his ownself would have preferred not to be drunk this afternoon. If the truth be knew, Gilbert Mecklin was sitting there in his chair thinking, Now I wonder how this happened again, just when I didn't want it to happen, how did it come to pass that I am sitting here

> unintentionally drunk on my ass with wrist-cutting music playing on the record player when I have great need to comfort two children who have lost so much and seen too much death in their little lives? The alcohol made Gilbert Mecklin groggy. He felt a little like he had been hit over the head and covered with a heavy blanket (Nordan 18-19).

Gilbert's affliction pits his physiological craving for booze against his own conscience that tries to dissuade him from drinking. Like Leon Barlow before him, Gilbert recognizes the unwanted fallout from another bender yet remains helpless to stop it. As the story progresses, so too does Sugar's intuition about the real nature of his father's disease. Similarly to other white male alcoholics, Gilbert's illness is fused to his being a southerner. When Pearl Bailey—a black woman—sings on television, "My father left the room in disgust and got so drunk he had to be taken to the hospital to have his stomach pumped. I had always known he drank because of me, and for the first time I didn't care. I wished he would die and then I cried my guts out about that too. My mother said, 'If anybody asks you, just say he got food poisoning'" (82). The intrusion of a black woman into the Mecklin's living room—on the surface at least, an emblem of (unwanted) social progress—spurs Gilbert to act as a southerner irritated by this racial incursion. As a white southern man, he cannot bear the sight of a black woman accepted by a national audience, so, in a reassertion of his southern manhood, he drinks to the point of near death. Note, too, how Sugar's mother's concern is not for her husband's well-being, but for how others might perceive his hospitalization. Presumably, his drunken reaction is acceptable, but the excess is not. His wife's shame stems either from Gilbert's masculinity being tainted (he cannot hold his liquor) or—and this seems more likely—from the deviant status of problem drinkers in the rural South at this time. In a region where class remains at the forefront of social relations,[6] alcoholism compromises the outside perception of the family in a potentially damaging way.

[6] Even though Nordan invokes a gritty, rural South, the Mecklins are set apart from "those poor sad people," the Conroys: "My family was poor, but this did not keep us from looking down on the Conroys and sneering when they

Gilbert begins to understand the impossibility of curbing his consumption. On one family vacation, he boasts, "'I haven't had a drink of whiskey since me and my wife and boy left the Delta. No d.t.'s, no hallucinations, nothing'" (126). Such confidence gestures toward recovery as the goal. That Gilbert suffers "nothing" is doubtful and it is not long before he relapses. Absent from Gilbert's drinking sprees is the violence that so pervades the characters of Brown and Crews, lending complexity to his role as an alcoholic. Unlike Leon or Joe Lon, Gilbert does not drink to spur literary creativity or even to cope with suicidal despair. Sugar, for one, takes a more philosophical stance relative to his father's predicament, confessing, "This sounds like a joke or an exaggeration, but I swear it is not. There was something magical about the amount of benign bad luck that, on a daily basis, swept through my father's life like weather and judgment" (157). Such a diagnosis permeates the work of all three Grit Lit writers: Joe Lon asks "What ails me?" and one Brown narrator acknowledges having been given "the short end of the stick." The fundamental inability to answer the question precedes Joe Lon's suicide. For Brown, being given the short end of the stick speaks as much to an undesirable birthright (and thus, not being able to find fulfillment for his literary energies) as it does to alcoholic despair. Although Brown does not ponder recovery-as-sobriety, his characters (Barlow in particular) sidestep suicidal discontent. Sugar, though, references alcoholism and recovery through sobriety. Gilbert's alcoholic reaction to Pearl Bailey and his wife's disapproval at the embarrassing bender suggests that, in the Grit Lit South, recovery seems impossible for individual or region. In the rural South, recovery eludes the hard drinking men precisely because their identities require that they consume; moreover, that some like Gilbert happen to be alcoholics is simply "benign bad luck."

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took canned goods from the Episcopal charity box at Christmas" (90-91). Thus, Gilbert's alcoholic drinking is somewhat acceptable in its projection of masculinity but not in its figurative proximity to other "poor sad people" known as the town drunks.

Much later in Sugar's life, he returns from the military and finds that his father has stopped drinking. He observes, "It was hard to deny that he was different. He had stopped drinking, for one thing. He went to meetings that he called his Don't Drink meetings, and to tell the truth, I had never seen him more in the flush of good health. It had been almost a whole year since he had a drink" (160). But alcohol has ravaged more than Gilbert's body. At the behest of his recovery program, Gilbert apologizes to his wife who has not only suffered his incapacitation but also personal embarrassment in his attending Don't Drink meetings (again, recall how southern masculinity is compromised as it relates to drinking and recovery). This moment shows how his drinking entangles the entire family. Surprisingly, however, Sugar points to recovery as having inflicted damage commensurate to the alcoholism: "But in fact here was an irresistible quality about my father's particular doom. It did not seem entirely related to alcoholism. It seemed more cosmic, as if there were demons other than rum that did not care for my father as well" (161). Perhaps there are indeed "demons other than rum" possessing Gilbert, but Sugar's sentiment resonates euphemistically here. After all, was alcohol not dubbed "demon rum" by temperance advocates, granting booze the proper religious signification to make temperance inherently "moral?" Nervous and hollowed by alcoholism, Gilbert is unable to articulate his apology. Rather than contextualizing this experience as bridging his father's alcoholic and sober lives, Sugar envisions another remedy: "I thought, If he could have a drink of whiskey he could do this. Sobriety had killed this moment, this marriage" (166).

In this alcoholic marriage, the enabler-enabled symbiosis cannot survive Gilbert's sobriety. What makes this "divorce" more severe than Temple and Gowan's is that, unlike Gowan, Gilbert relapses. Sugar states, "I wish this story ended more happily than it actually does. All this happened a long time ago, and now I'm middle-aged and have been going to Don't

Drink meetings for a long while myself. There is a good deal of wreckage in my own past, a family I hurt in the same way my father hurt me, and the same way his father hurt him" (170-171). Sugar's introspection comes from the vantage of sobriety, a place where he not only recognizes the familial precedent of alcoholism but also the ways that it destroys lives. What is necessary to glean from Sugar's recollection of his father's drinking is its tone of despair. Although Gilbert moves further than Joe Lon and Leon in the continuum of recovery, actual sobriety is not only difficult (if not impossible) but discouraged. Gilbert's association with Don't Drink shames his wife, and his pleas for forgiveness seem pathetic. At least when Gilbert drinks, Sugar and his mother cope with the fallout through euphemism—"We could hear my father finishing up in the bathroom. The big finish this morning, with the final gags of dry heaving and the scuffing sounds of crawling on the floor, where he had been lying with his head in the toilet. Not the spitting and the cursing. Next the gargling…Even my mother had to notice. She said, 'Dad's driving the porcelain bus this morning'" (137). As an alcoholic in the Grit Lit South, Gilbert never stands a chance.

Lewis "Buddy" Nordan does, however. In *Boy with Loaded Gun*, Nordan's life closely parallels much of Sugar Mecklin's—particularly in the portrayal of his father's drinking—though this text deals more with the personal legacy of his father's alcoholism. Nordan is also an alcoholic and compromises much of his life through drinking. By story's end, Nordan is sober, and his telling the story as a sober man (like Jack B.) signals a continuing recovery. At least for now. The attention paid to his shaky sobriety suggests that its long term sustainability is questionable. And while all recovering alcoholics view each sober day as a small victory, the culturally loaded combination of Nordan's southern-ness and his vocation as a writer, I argue, make his recovery altogether uncertain. What is also important to recognize is that Nordan's

sober narrative reaches its dry apex *only when he leaves the South*. Nordan closes the book without so much as a drop of alcohol in his system. However, that his sobriety occurs in Pittsburgh implies that, like Crews and Brown before him, recovery remains fleeting to men in the gritty South.

The drunk/sober narrative unfolds through the tensions emerging from Nordan's southern origins and his vocation as a writer. Part One of the memoir recounts Nordan's childhood and the details of his father's drinking. Part Two outlines his young adulthood, the marriage to his college sweetheart Elizabeth, and the precipitous slip into alcoholism and adultery. As he and Elizabeth settle into domestic bliss, Nordan's drinking heightens. He admits,

> Daily drinking, even daily morning drinking, was commonplace to me now. I couldn't remember just when this came to be so, it was so gradual a thing. I was a little drunk, even so early in the day. I spoke of having 'a drink' or 'a toddy' or some other singular noun to describe my regular approach to unconsciousness. I was beginning to take a nap early in the day so that I might wake up refreshed and drink again in the evening. I could get drunk twice a day, once I got the nap system worked out, and still function pretty much normally.… I took myself to strange comforts with alcohol (148-149).

Unlike Gilbert Mecklin, Nordan's drunkenness manifests itself through violence and infidelity, and, before long, his hangovers resemble Suttree's: "My mouth was dry, the pain in my head and limbs was so intense that when I opened my eyes the images of my surroundings … seemed to flicker in the manner of old silent movies" (192). The death of his infant son Jesse Robert intersects tragically with his decision to quit his teaching job and fully dedicate himself to writing. Like Leon Barlow, Nordan conflates drinking and writing, and he is unable to separate one from the other, since "in my mind the two were related, writing and drinking. Hard drinking was part of the romance of writerly suffering.… When I quit drinking years later, I believed that I had also quit writing, the two were so intricately woven into a single fabric in my imagination" (195). For him, bottoming out among empty bottles and strewn pages remains part of his

alcoholic self-identity. Bill F. and Friends have set a precedent: "As I had imagined my situation in the beginning, I was standing in the rear of a long queue of writers headed by Faulkner and Hemingway and other notable drunks. I had taken my humble place among the masters, and I would not give up my place in that line even if it meant I had to drink myself to death" (195). Like Leon Barlow, Nordan sees his craft intertwined with drinking—*they did it successfully so why can't I*? Nordan wants badly to be among the Friends of Bill F., and his romanticizing their drinking speaks to the low depths of his situation. Sure, Faulkner and Hemingway achieved success, but their drinking and writing caused them (and everyone around them) to suffer. Nordan's place in line, he comes to realize, might be better occupied by someone else.

Part Three amounts to the apex of Nordan's recovery narrative. When he finally leaves Mississippi—divorced and broke—he no longer feels burdened by the alcoholic-writer expectation. Nordan's flight north is no small coincidence, and I suggest that only by leaving the South can he recover. While attending Don't Drink meetings and living at the Pittsburgh YMCA, he notes that "It was clear to Annie [who becomes his second wife], as to anyone who noticed me at all, that I was not merely a recently hopeless drunk, but a displaced person as well" (220). Displaced, yes, but dry. For perhaps the first time, he writes sober: "I have to hand it to myself that I never stopped working at writing stories during this time, through the worst of my drinking and through those terrifying days and months of early sobriety" (223). Sobriety at the typewriter eludes Leon Barlow, but not Nordan. Paramount to his recovery is his self-exile from the South, suggesting that he might still be drinking had he stayed in Mississippi. His sobriety is no small achievement, especially given how he conceives of his writing and drinking as one and the same. In a moment of introspection, Nordan reads a book, noting, "I was grateful I wasn't as bad off as the poor drunk in the book" (226), a powerful sentiment considering that throughout the memoir

he *was* the poor drunk in the book. Indeed, Nordan's recovery moves an important step beyond anything portrayed in *Music of the Swamp*, *A Feast of Snakes*, and *Big Bad Love*, as he (temporarily) escapes the unfortunate birthright that destroys Gilbert, Joe Lon, and, to a lesser extent, Leon Barlow. There is little reason to believe that he will stray from the sober path initially, as Nordan subscribes wholly to the tenets of Don't Drink: "We 'worked steps' that we believed, on faith and on observation of others like us, would lead not merely to a sober life but to spiritual awakenings in our drug-deadened selves" (232). But these beliefs remain in constant flux. On a business trip to New Orleans, he comes dangerously close to a sexual encounter with a former lover. While the affair does not come to pass, Nordan nonetheless exhibits behavior that could compromise the sober equilibrium he has attained in Pittsburgh. Does this mean that, like Crews and Brown, Nordan and his Grit Lit South are all but beyond recovery? The alcoholic threat remains always, but Nordan seems to have achieved a healthy measure of clarity. New Orleans provides the perfect storm for alcoholic remission, but Nordan abstains: "the azaleas were long gone, of course, but as alcohol and danger were not the key to my happiness any longer, New Orleans is a flower garden all summer, and there were other dark blossoms of strange beauty and fragrance to replace what was already past" (272-273). These "dark blossoms" are perhaps foreboding of something dangerous, but as long as he warms his seat on the wagon, Nordan inspires hope.

And yet there remains a certain sadness—even an inevitably—to the stories of William Wilson and William Faulkner when considering how their enduring contributions to the world relate to alcoholism. Novelist and Wilson biographer Susan Cheever notes that by mid-January 1971—the year of his death—Wilson, "a man who hadn't had a drink in almost thirty-seven

years, a man who had discovered what is still the only successful way to treat alcoholism, was asking for whiskey" (249). Sensing that he was days away from death, Wilson, much like Gowan Stevens "found that it was a drink he wanted." I suppose that such a reckless deathbed wish ought to be conceived for what it is: a dying request bereft of long term consequence. But this near slip speaks less to Wilson's occupancy on the wagon and more to the demonic hold that alcoholism possesses on its bodily inhabitants. Addicts are but a tilt of the glass away from relapse. Wilson must have known this more than anyone, for his life was littered with men and women like him—alcoholics struggling for sobriety one day at a time—who could not conquer their hardwired appetite for liquor. Some of these victims were instrumental in Wilson's own path to sobriety: "Even Ebby [T.]—the man who had brought to Bill Wilson the seed of what was to become Alcoholics Anonymous—had gone back to drinking and showed no sign or interest in stopping, even for 'a day at a time'" (Kurtz 76-77). Wilson would not have been the only alcoholic whose circuitous journey to sobriety was altered by a slip.

Although he never found lasting sobriety, Faulkner's story ends similarly. Another fall from a horse led to increasing pain placated through pills and alcohol. Predictably, the combination was lethal. Faulkner biographer Jay Parini writes, "Yet the back continued to worsen throughout the month, and he began to take pain tablets each night in order to sleep. He drank his usual quantities of whiskey, too. His doctor urged him to seek treatment for the back in Memphis, worried that perhaps more was wrong then met the eye, but Faulkner dismissed the suggestion. *The familiar cycle began again*" (425, emphasis mine). This cycle projects an inevitable symmetry to the end of Faulkner's life. Born into a culture that celebrated drinking, he died not far from a whiskey bottle. As a writer haunted both by the demons of addiction and the social inequality entrenched in his homeland, perhaps Bill F. never came to terms with his South

and its complicated relationship to modernity. Seth Moglen certainly sees this, identifying Faulkner as a quintessential melancholic modernist whose work attempted (unsuccessfully) to make sense of confusing and pervasive social forces. Even though Faulkner finds a useful trope to investigate the South's stance on social progress as a whole, I am not so sure that, for him at least, the South is recovered. Or recoverable. And yet…

And yet "his fiction commonly takes up matters of general importance to modern readers: the loss of community, the degradation of nature, the impact of raw capitalism, the lure and destructiveness of class and racial divisions … [s]o the South becomes a lens through which the reader can view the modern world, comparing it to a world that may or may not have existed" (432). The southern lens may not render the region favorably, but it does—drunk or sober—offer the *possibility* that we all are not doomed or damned. After all, there are Friends of both Bills who bravely face the dreadful inevitability of failure in recovery. Jack Burden is one of them. Cornelius Suttree is too, though we can only keep our fingers crossed for him and hope for the best. And yet, just as Bill Wilson's attempt to start one last bar tab shows, recovery for the addict and the South remains in flux. Just ask Joe Lon Mackey. As the South still struggles with progress today, there remains no prescriptive anodyne to cure its literal and figurative addictions. Despite his ongoing sobriety, Lewis Nordan admits to a continued struggle with sexual indiscretions that would compromise his recovery every bit as much as booze. Leon Barlow seems to find temporary equilibrium in his life, but he does so *despite* his alcoholism, not because he jumps on the wagon. Perhaps Betti DeLoreo's next letter brings good news, but such speculation is hardly useful when considering that Leon's creator, Larry Brown, died of a massive heart attack at age 55, no doubt the result of a life of hard drinking.

Yes, the Friends of Bill W. and the Friends of Bill F. relapse and most never recover. And yet, Bill Wilson's final drink order was denied despite several requests. His caretakers functioned as surrogate alcoholics; their presence denied Wilson's life the same drunken symmetry of Faulkner's. Instead, Wilson's sobriety—something at once intensely personal and collectively symbolic—endures as a model for addicts. So what are we to make of alcohol, recovery, and social progress in the South? Just as Wilson's legacy remains, so, too, does Faulkner's as a southerner mired in a cultural tradition discounting the long term effects of alcoholism. But as the Friends of Bill F. continue to show, the South's relation to social progress will be scrutinized from within, hinting that the regressive monotony characterizing the region might not prevail.

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Vita

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